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# SEPHORA;

## A HEBREW TALE,

17146

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE

## COUNTRY OF PALESTINE,

AND OF THE

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

OF THE

## ANCIENT ISRAELITES.

---

Cosi a l'egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi
Di soave licor gli orli del vaso:
Succhi amari ingannato in tanto ei beve,
E da l'inganno suo vita riceve.

GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

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TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.
1826.

13

LONDON:
PRINTED BY IBOTSON AND PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

THIS WORK

IS

INSCRIBED

TO THE MEMORY OF

SUSANNAH LADY GRAVES,

AS A SMALL TRIBUTE OF

GRATEFUL AFFECTION.

# PREFACE.

THERE are certain objects in the material world of which we can scarcely say to what species they belong—whether they are stone or vegetable, animate or inanimate, bird or beast, monkey or man.

These connecting links seem to stand alone in the system of nature, disowned by those discordant parts of the creation which they were designed to unite; and, at best, exciting in us but a kind of abhorrent admiration.

Literature has also its apes, its bats, its coralines, and its zoophytes, which, though disclaimed by all parties, and certainly not

the most interesting part of the intellectual world, may yet, perhaps, in that contemptible station which they affect to occupy, be found not altogether without their use.

This humble story claims to belong to some of those undefinable classes of the mental creation: and, should it present but the lowest link in the chain of Providence, to assist some weary sojourner of earth in rising to the love and knowledge of heavenly things; the end of its being will have been more than answered, and the dearest hopes which it has ever excited, fulfilled.

The author is aware, that a large portion of the religious world pronounce a general anathema against all works of fiction.—— That most works of this description are highly pernicious, and that many are led away by an inordinate love of them, all must allow. But that fiction may be made subservient to the cause of truth, the Para-

bles are a sufficient testimony. And the example of Saint Paul teaches us that we may lawfully seize even on the altar of an idol to declare the unknown God.

The era of this little story is some years after that siege of Jerusalem, which seated Herod on the throne. It attempts to give a sketch of the manners and customs of the ancient Israelites, and also a true general description of the country of Judea. By a reference to the appendix, the reader will be able to judge how far these points have been attained.

There is something interesting in the peculiar manners and customs of all nations; but those of the Jews have a twofold claim to our regard: first, as they are our spiritual ancestors, and in their religion we trace the source of that widening stream of living waters, which is finally destined to overflow and fertilise a barren world—and secondly,

because even their most trivial employments, which have no connexion with *their* religion, become in some sort amalgamated with *ours*, by the frequent and familiar allusions which are made to them in the Holy Scriptures; and in proportion as we become better acquainted with those customs from whence these sacred similies are drawn, we shall perceive a greater force and beauty in the instructions which they are designed to elucidate.

# SEPHORA.

## CHAPTER I.

On that side of Palestine whose shores are washed by the waves of the Mediterranean, on the banks of the river Kishon, there lived one whom we will call Sephora, and her father and mother Patrobus and Pythonissa.

They were in that station of life, which the wise son of Jakeh prayed might be his, when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." By their occupation they were basket-makers, but they also followed the pastoral life, and were the shepherds of their own flock.

The employment of a shepherd in a country and climate like this in which we live, is

subject to many inconveniences, and is more pleasing to fancy than to experience; but in that happy land which the Almighty had appointed for the residence of his people, and as the type of heaven itself, the most blissful ideas of the poets, as far as concerns the beauties and fruition of nature, were more than realized.

Sephora was of a thoughtful character, lively in her affections, warmly attached to her parents, and awake to all the beauties of creation, which her highly-favoured country presented in every glowing form of majestic grandeur and alluring grace. The nation to which she belonged, the place of her abode, and her manner of life, all had a strong tendency to nourish enthusiastic feelings of friendship, of devotion, and of nature, and her mind seemed to acknowledge their influence.

The cottage where this family dwelt was simple, like themselves. It was built of blocks of granite, and was but one story high, and divided into six compartments.

It stood on a gentle eminence in an

opening of a wood, where spice trees breathed their delightful sweets, where myrtles offered their deepened shade, where the orange and the lemon presented at once both their blossom and their fruit; while the vine festooned her wanton branches from tree to tree in all the wild luxuriance of nature, and decked them with her green and purple clusters.

The humble edifice was sheltered on three sides by this wood; on the south east, a long chain of the Hermon mountains appeared above the trees, softening with the distance till the dark blue mingled with the sky.

This was the usual and most sober suit of this lofty ridge of hills, but nothing could be more beautiful, as the sun's setting beams were reflected on them, than to watch the changeful lights from their fertile base, to their craggy and snow-capped summits; they might then almost vie with the purest gems in the lustre and variety of their tints.

To the north the cottage opened on the steep banks of the river Kishon, whose rapid

stream swept over its rocky channel and refreshed all the air.

The low-roofed building itself was covered with the rose of Sharon, and adjoining to it was a garden, in which all the family delighted to work, planted with flowers and vegetables, where the useful and the pleasurable lay mingled together, and formed a happy emblem of their lives.

This often employed them, but Sephora passed most of her days in helping her father to drive their sheep to pasture, and while they were watching them, they would sit down under the shade of trees and weave their willow baskets; when Patrobus would relate to her many parts of their wonderful history; of their being the chosen people of God; of the miracles he had wrought for their deliverance out of Egypt; and of the promise of a Messiah who was to be their everlasting prince and Saviour.

Sephora forgot to interlace her osiers as she listened to his words, and often did she lift up her heart to the God of heaven that she

might live to see his promise fulfilled; yet she, like most of her nation, looked for a temporal prince, and an earthly power, and not for the meek and lowly Saviour, whose kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy.

Sometimes when the flock fed near their home, Sephora would take her harp on which her father had taught her to play, and chant the praises of the Almighty with an overflowing heart, while she found in those constant allusions to a shepherd's life, and that pastoral scenery, with which the Hebrew poetry abounds, a simplicity and beauty she would scarcely have been conscious of, had she been less conversant with rural occupations, or less observant of the varying face of nature.

But Patrobus and Sephora's work did not always lie near their home; they had often far to seek for pasture for their flock, and this circumstance only added variety and pleasure to their lives.

Sephora was never in greater glee than when they had some new scenes to explore; and her father delighted to retrace, if not to

renew his own boyish feelings, when he saw the enterprising hope of youth sparkle in her eye; and often would he go far out of their path to gratify her wishes; gratifying her wishes, was in fact but accomplishing his own, for he knew none greater than to make her happy.

They had one day wandered far down along the banks of the Kishon, till they came to a steep rock that rose perpendicularly out of the river, and was crowned with the ruins of an old castle that had belonged to one of the former lords of the land.

Patrobus had often pointed it out to Sephora at a distance, and she had longed to examine it, but had never been near it till now.

They climbed up the rude steps of the rock, and walked through its silent and deserted courts. There is something very peculiar in the pleasure we take in looking at the ruins of ancient grandeur. The gay and glittering scenes which have passed within its crumbling grass-grown walls—the restless beings who acted in them, now quiet as

their graves, and peaceful as the clods of the valley—the tumult of war and the pride of a court, changed to solitude and silence. These striking contrasts arrest our passions; we pause to remember other times till we forget our own; and all the vanities and all the woes of life seem to fade away before these vestiges of mouldering magnificence.

Sephora and Patrobus climbed one of the highest towers by a spiral staircase, and alarmed some sea fowl that had taken possession of it; when they were at the top he pointed out to her the distant mountains of Gilboa where Saul and Jonathan were slain, and if brought to her recollection in a lively manner David's beautiful lamentation over them.

Whichever way they turned some sacred subject was presented to their mind, for the whole ground over which they looked teemed with monuments of mercy, while beneath them rolled the Kishon, whose ancient stream swept away their enemies "when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera;" when the elements themselves by their "*high en-*

*gendered battles,*" conspired to deepen and extend the flood, so that the Canaanite " sunk like lead in the mighty waters."

But without recurring to the past, they here saw enough of the present mercies of God to fill the mind with wonder and with gratitude.

About three miles up the banks of the river, but appearing quite near, for a deep valley lay between, was their little flock of sheep, feeding under the protection of a peasant boy they had accidentally met with; and a little beyond them, on the side of a rugged hill, stood what Sephora called their rock cottage. It was a cave about eighteen feet wide at the entrance, the depth something more, and the height considerable. It was in a rude semicircular form, but whether so shaped by art or nature was not known. It might perhaps have belonged formerly to the lords of the castle, and have been appropriated either to pleasure, or as a place of security.

When Sephora and Patrobus first discovered it, it was quite concealed by a thick

shade of trees, and all the beauties of the forest seemed assembled before it. It is probable that they had originally been planted there, and young ones sprung up as the old ones decayed; but they had now the fantastic wildness of nature, and displayed in their blossom, or their fruit, all the vivid colours of the east. The orange, and the lemon, the scarlet pomegranate and the blushing almond, the hibiscus, and the citron, the cistus, and acanthus, mixed with the dark green of the cedar, the laurel, and the myrtle, and each mutually received grace and beauty from the other.

Sephora had found this cave when she was quite a child scrambling under the trees in search of flowers. A vine grew over the greatest part of the entrance, and some of the branches had crept within clinging to the rock, and, where their tendrils no longer found any thing to clasp, they hung down suspended from the sides and roof, and trailed upon the ground. Most of the light that was admitted into the cave came through

the leaves of the vine, and no painted window ever yielded a more grateful gloom.

Sephora returned quickly to her father to tell him of her discovery, and at the same time that she was recounting it, eagerly took his hand and drew him towards the place whose beauty she was expatiating on.

Patrobus was scarcely less delighted with it than herself, and it cost them many a happy day's labour to convert it into a useful retreat from the noontide heat. They lopped away the branches of the trees till they had formed a commodious covered avenue to their grotto, and surely a more beautiful portico was seldom seen. The stems of the trees they planted with the rose, the honeysuckle, the passion-flower, and various other creeping plants, which soon climbed this trellis-work of nature and encompassed it with various garlands.

The branches of the vine that had taken possession of the cave, they fastened close to the sides of it, this was their tapestry, and for furniture they matted couches of the

softest heaths on which they reposed themselves, after the eastern custom, in the heat of the day.

Sephora fancied that she did all these things herself, her little feeble hands followed her father's and did what they could, and she always looked on this place and on all belonging to it, with that peculiar prepossession of delight with which we never fail to regard the successful efforts of our own labour.

She was pleased now to see it in a new point of view from the top of this lofty tower.

Some miles beyond the cave lay the wood in which their cottage was embosomed, a smoke rising out of it betrayed the spot where it stood, and reminded them that the kind wife and mother was preparing for their return. Alas! they none of them then knew that she was preparing in vain.

They could not immediately resolve to quit the place where they were, the sun was about to set, and throwing its gold and purple gleams over the utmost verge of the Me-

diterranean, and Sephora waited to see it sink beneath the wave. She had never till this day had so near a view of the ocean, and it filled her mind with thoughts of the great Creator and the wonders of the deep.

As the sun was sinking in the sea, the moon rose in silent majesty from the east, and thus at once presented three of the grandest objects of the creation, beauteous, and uncontaminated as when they first issued from the hands of their Maker.

The stars one after another began to appear as they cautiously descended the rock, and before they reached the bottom of the valley that separated them from their flock, the whole ether glowed with the gems of night.

Sephora's thoughts were so filled with all she had seen that she had not observed her father's unusual silence till he suddenly took her arm, and said that he felt unwell.

Every image that had before occupied her, immediately fled from her mind, and she saw nothing but Patrobus, and feared she

knew not what, as she looked anxiously on his pale face which the moonlight made still more wan.

They had walked but a little way, the one tottering with fear, the other with illness, when he said he could go no further. What an agonizing moment for poor Sephora, alone, far from the reach of human succour, without any thing to offer that might give her a hope of restoring him—she saw him sink on the earth from which he was never more to rise. She sank down too—not in despair, but in fervent supplication to her heavenly Father. Her earthly parent could not now speak, but he took her clasped hands, pressed them silently between his and looked up to heaven, while a triumphant smile enlightened his features, as if he already saw the amaranthine wreath of immortality ready to descend on his head.

Sephora was cheered by the confidence his looks expressed, and arising from the ground with greater comfort of mind and composure of spirit, immediately resolved to go in search of assistance.

She was more than a mile and half from the sheep-fold, and most of that way was up hill; yet she ran with such swiftness that she scarcely felt her feet till she reached it. She called to the peasant boy but could not tell him what was the matter; she could only say, "my Father," and point to the way she came.

The boy went forward in that direction while she darted into the cave where they had dined at noon, and hastily caught up a jar of water, the only thing she could see that was likely to afford relief, and then returned to Patrobus with almost equal swiftness to that with which she had gone from him.

Alas! he neither knew how she came, or went, for his senses were fled. She stooped down and spoke to him, but he answered neither by word or sign, she took his hand, but it seemed insensible to the pressure of hers, she kissed his cold dewy cheek—the damp struck to her heart—she fainted and fell down by his side.

The poor peasant boy missed his road, and

lid not know which way to turn, till he was guided by the moonlight falling on Sephora's waving raiment, as she ran towards the spot where her father lay.

When he came to the place, he thought for a moment that they were both gone, but the laboured breathing of death soon convinced him that Patrobus at least still lived. He had some wine in his scrip, and a shepherd's drinking horn, into which having poured some, and mixing it with water, he sprinkled their foreheads, and put some to their lips. Sephora soon began to show signs of life, but not till her father's had fled for ever.

This awful moment of separation from her beloved parent was one that she had often shrunk from the thought of, as what she felt she had no strength to bear. It was now come suddenly upon her with many adventitious circumstances to heighten the distress, and she was soon sufficiently revived to know the extent of her misfortune; but instead of sinking under the blow, she felt sustaining comfort shed upon her soul, like dew

upon the fainting earth, and the idea of her father's happiness so possessed her mind, that had she seen descending angels wait for his departing spirit to waft it to the realms of bliss, she had scarcely felt more assured that he was entered on an eternity of joy. She well knew on what his dependance for salvation was always placed: not on his own goodness and innocency, (though few could boast a more unspotted life,) but entirely on the merits of the promised Saviour. And this hope full of immortality which the Holy Spirit implanted and nourished in his mind, was the purifier of his heart, making him hate all the ways of sin, and earnestly long and strive to have his Maker's lost image restored to his soul.

Most of his neighbours derided him for these strange notions, they thought that in his theory of religion he made much too light of the moral duties, and that in his practice he was far too scrupulously exact in the performance of them. But Patrobus calmly suffered their contempt, while he felt a peace which the world could neither give

nor take away. And perhaps, had the most scornful of his scorners passed through the rugged valley, and seen the extended corpse smiling triumphantly in death, and the fond daughter who had just lost her dearest earthly friend, bending over it with a lofty composure of spirit that made her look quite beyond this world and all its joys and cares, they might have owned, that it must be something more than a delusion which could thus disarm the grave of its sting and its victory, and they might have been almost tempted to exclaim with the sinful prophet, " may I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his."

Sephora had still the bitter task of telling Pythonissa that she was a widow, and how to do it she knew not. She saw by the stars that it was near midnight, and felt that her poor mother must be already full of anxious thought. At length she determined on watching by the body of her father, and sending the young peasant to the cottage to say that Patrobus had been much tired and could not

reach home, but if the old servant came to him, Sephora would return to her mother.

Having dispatched the messenger, she again sat down by her father, and fondly took the lifeless hand that had never been raised but to bless her. No superstitious dread alarmed her mind, and all nature seemed in unison with her sorrow and her hope. The stillness of night, when every leaf was at rest; the silent motion of the heavenly bodies fulfilling their destined courses; the bright beams of the moon illuminating the stony valley where they were, and glittering in the rippling wave that closed it; the purifying rush of distant waters, and the spicy-breathing air anointing and embalming the dead:—What funereal chamber was ever furnished like this, or had less of terror in its solemn pomp? What departed monarch, laid out in all his kingly state, was ever so surrounded? But behold a brighter emblem now appears to cheer her patient hope. The rising sun with golden rays gives promise of that glorious resur-

rection morn, when friends shall meet to part no more.

The cheerful sounds of day now soon began to return, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of flocks, the tinkling of the sheep-bell, the chirping of birds, the hum of insects, and the distant noise of labour and vociferous childish joy. All these glad tokens of animated life reached even this remote valley, but they served rather to sadden than to cheer poor Sephora's heart, for they reminded her that the sound she loved best she would hear no more—her father's voice was mute.

She was giving way to that despondency which this melancholy thought inspired, when she was surprised by other notes than those of rustic life. A strain more sweet and solemn than any she had ever heard burst softly on her ear and died away so gradually that you could scarcely say the moment when it ceased. It seemed borne on the passing gale and all again was silent.

She looked distrustfully round, but could see nothing, and she felt some of that per-

plexity of thought which peculiar situations will excite in almost any mind. She doubted whether she had really heard, and if she had, she doubted still more to which world those sounds belonged. Soon however they returned with more distinctness and increasing clearness, and came nearer and nearer to her till the soothing notes changed all at once to horrid screams and rending shrieks.

Sephora started, and looking at the hill above her head, saw on the summit the funereal bier with the attendant minstrels, and her poor mother with rent garments and dishevelled hair, beating her breast, and using all those violent expressions of grief which were customary though forbidden to their nation.

The peasant boy had done as he was told, but the affections are vigilant and suspicious. The anxious wife saw that he had not told her the whole truth; his evasive answers when questioned confirmed her in this notion, and she did not rest till she had made him declare all, and more than all she most dreaded to hear.

Sephora ran to meet her mother, and threw herself into her arms. Her heart was too full to speak, but she bathed her bosom with her silent tears.

Pythonissa was astonished at the composure of her grief, and thought it insensibility; but she had hopes that her poor mother knew not of.

They now again moved forward, the minstrels playing and chanting the solemn songs of death, till they came to where the corpse lay, when they again uttered the same frantic shrieks of woe as when they first beheld it from the heights.

This formal ceremony over, they took up the body and prepared to move it to his house. The widow went first with all the gestures of grief in her action, and much of its oppressive weight at her heart. Sephora silently followed the bier, feeling that though her earthly joys were cut short, her father and her hope were both in heaven.

As they passed by the cave, the scene of so many happy days, she could not restrain her sobs and tears. The sheep who were

still grazing before it, seemed to forget their food as the mournful procession passed, and looked up with heavy eyes, as if they knew who it was that was slowly borne along, while the faithful dog who had all night been guarding the flock, jumped whining on the bier, licked his master's hands and face, and scarcely could the minstrels drive him off, while he mixed with theirs his untimed notes of woe.

When Sephora came near the cottage she trembled exceedingly. She had never yet approached it but with a dancing heart; and the sad contrast; the thousand conflicting thoughts of home-born joys now past, and tedious days to come, rushed at once upon her mind; and when she saw her beloved father's pallid corse borne through their rose-clad porch, she fell senseless to the ground. The minstrels here again set up their funeral cry, as for the poor widow she felt so overpowered, that she forgot all the forms of woe.

## CHAPTER II.

But leaving the further description of a wife and daughter's sorrow on the first amazement of grief at the loss of a husband and a father, let us pass on to the time when it was somewhat familiarized to their minds. And here poor Sephora's grief might be almost said to begin, or at least to assume a new character. At first, the thought of her father's happiness had almost raised her above the reach of sorrow. But though her confidence on this subject had not at all abated, yet its influence on her mind had very much decreased, while she every day became more and more sensible of the greatness of her loss.

Her former employments were now all over, or if not over, failed to give delight, and time which used to be gladdened by constant occupation, now seemed to ache as it passed.

The human mind must have something to do, to suffer or to enjoy; and we find that the dead calms of life often produce a greater nausea of existence than the roughest storms and billows of adversity.

Sephora felt that in yielding to this corroding grief, she was giving way to that proud spirit which refuses to be happy but in its own way. She called herself severely to account for not having resisted the indulgence of those selfish feelings. She considered that this world is a world of trial and not of uninterrupted enjoyment, and she earnestly prayed that she might both see her line of duty, and be able to fulfil it.

Her prayer was heard, and soon the approving voice of conscience whispered in her ear, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'

She now devoted the whole of her life to her mother, and in seeking her comfort she found her own, which she once thought was gone for ever. She was now watchful over all her actions, she forbore to do any thing that seemed to excite too tender a sorrow, and to enfeeble her mind.

She left off going alone to tend the flock, where every hill, and rock, and flowery dale, all that was loveliest in nature, reminded her of her father; to look on these scenes was to sigh, they were as the tombs of hours that were past, and faithful memory could never pass them unread.

Sephora's mother was a much less amiable character than her lost parent; her temper was bad, she was generally complaining, and she had but little of that instinctive tender affection which seems the peculiar gift of mothers. She had altogether been more a source of grief than happiness to her husband: not on account of these infirmities of disposition, for he, through divine grace, had so far conquered his own, as to be able to bear cheerfully with hers. But what grieved him, was, that he knew her heart was not right in the sight of God.

He had one day, a few years after they were married, been to the city of Nain, to take his baskets, and on his return he was tempted to trace the course of a stream,

and explore a part of the country he had never seen before.

It led him up a narrow glen that seemed as if it had been rent asunder by some sudden convulsion of nature. As he advanced, it grew wilder and wilder, and assumed a character of savage beauty he had rarely seen before. Probably the foot of man had seldom visited it, for the birds of solitude seemed to have taken it for their own. The owl, the osprey, and the eagle, fled at his approach; the trees seemed almost coeval with the rocks on which they grew; and at times their meeting branches cast the deepest gloom on the dark slow stream beneath.

He had walked on many miles and had made so many turnings that he was lost in conjecturing where it would lead to, when he found the glen abruptly terminated by a steep mountain that raised its head high above the neighbouring rocks, and was crowned by a grove of ancient palm-trees, while the stream whose course he had been pursuing, broke over the top of it with the most impetuous

grandeur and raised a cloud of foam. He was lost in wonder at the amazing scene, and though he knew not whether he was advancing nearer home or receding farther from it, he immediately determined to climb the height. As he got near the top he heard strange noises which he could not account for, but his surprise soon changed to horror and pity when he saw an idol raised up on high, and a multitude of deluded people offering sacrifice with songs and dances, and all the mysterious rites of iniquity. His heart sickened at the sight. What then must his emotions have been, when he saw amongst the crowd his wife and infant child. His agony was so great, that Pythonissa appeared touched with remorse, and solemnly promised never to attend any of those assemblies again. She kept that promise, yet Patrobus had reason to fear that it was more from regard to him than to God.

Though this discovery of his wife's idolatry, shed bitter into his cup of life, yet he was thankful that he knew of it; for it made him much more careful than he otherwise

would have been to take every opportunity of instilling true religion into the mind of his child, and it made him keep her more constantly with himself than he would have thought it right to have done, had her mother been equally disposed to lead her in the way in which she should go. He vigilantly detected, and affectionately exposed every evil principle of action, however playfully concealed beneath all her winning ways of childhood, and taught her to consider no thought, or word, or deed, as too trivial for the notice of God. Thus Sephora owed her earliest lessons of piety to her father, he formed her infant mind, and the Almighty blessed his labour and breathed into it the breath of life.

Pythonissa thought he gave himself a great deal of unnecessary trouble in all this, yet she herself had reaped, and was now reaping, in a more especial manner the fruit of those instructions which she secretly despised.

Sephora's continual thought was how to make her mother happy. She endeavoured to appear cheerful, that she might not excite her jealousy, by giving her reason to suppose

that all her own happiness was buried in her father's tomb. She resolved, if it were possible, not even to see her parent's failings, and studiously to avoid every thing that had a tendency to irritate her temper; to take upon herself all the domestic cares that seemed to fatigue her, and to try once more to spread an air of contentment and peace round their desolate dwelling. These were the resolutions that she formed, and for being able to fulfil them, she trusted in him from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works must proceed. Her neighbours, and even Pythonissa, whom it was difficult to please, acknowledged that she fulfilled her filial duties perfectly, and doubted not but that God would bless her for it; while she herself felt there was so much of sin even in her best actions, that they must shrink from the observation of infinite purity, and call for mercy rather than reward.

## CHAPTER III.

SEPHORA had soon no need to make an effort to appear cheerful, for she really was so, and in resigning herself entirely to the will of God, and striving to do the duties of that station in which she was placed, she found an animated peace that must be felt to be understood.

She was now full of household cares, she pressed the olive for its oil; and the grape for its gladdening juice; or dried its gathered clusters in the sun. She drew milk from the flock; cast her net into the stream; took honey from the hives; and cleansed their raiment in the brook.

This last employment, by which many of our menials would think themselves degraded, was formerly among the occupations of king's daughters: and Sephora was never better pleased with her day's work, than when she unloosed their little ass from its

crib, saddled him with paniers of her own and her father's weaving, laded him with their cloaths, and taking a basket of provisions in her hand, drove him before her down a steep narrow path in the wood at the back of their cottage which descended into a deep valley that was watered by a soft clear stream.

Nothing could exceed the romantic beauty of this vale, and none more difficult to describe.

The variety of images with which it was crowded, and the confusion and irregularity with which they were thrown together, made them look more like the *dream*, than the work of nature.

The place where Sephora began her work was in a nook covered with flowers, and shaded by olive and fig-trees, where the water formed a natural basin.

Here she unloaded her ass, and left him at liberty to feed while she performed her task. He generally disclaimed the delicacies under his feet, and roamed away in search of rougher fare. It was not necessary to limit

his wanderings, for kind treatment had taught him always to come when he was called; and as soon as her work was done, and the rocks resounded with the name of Emmor, he would leave the half-tasted thistle, and immediately obey the voice of his mistress. She had taught him to do this when a child, by always rewarding him when he came to her with a handful of parched corn.

Sephora always paused in her work at noon, when heat and labour made rest doubly grateful; and, reposed on her shaded flowery couch, she ate her simple, solitary meal, with a grateful heart, and contemplated, with admiration, the surrounding scenery.

The stream which glided peacefully by her, was the natural proprietor of the valley, but soon two bold usurpers from either side came down to claim possession of the sylvan realm.

The right hand flood made the more insidious attack, first conducting its stream obliquely, then hiding its course beneath the crowding myrtles, then dashing furiously over a bold projection of the rock that would

have impeded its course, and descending the remainder with a somewhat gentler motion, half concealed, and half revealed, by the fresher verdure of the shrubs through which it passed. While its daring antagonist, by two bold steps which hollowed out the rock, at once entered the scene of contest, and its angry foam recoiling on itself, seem to try to reach again the height from whence it fell.

Pendant trees, disheveled shrubs, and nodding rocks, looked as if they had come crouding and tumbling one upon another, to witness this war of the streams; while repeated echos, like the voice of fame, sent the rumour from cliff to cliff, and carried the tidings down the peaceful vale.

Sephora, when rested from her fatigue, and somewhat satiated with beholding this *moving* landscape, would often take the empty basket, in which she had carried her dinner, and walk by the margin of the brook to gather balsamic herbs, with whose medicinal virtues she was well acquainted, and afterwards taking them home, extract their juices,

Most of the remedies used in that country were of the healing kind; they had but little occasion for any other, for where the art of cookery was scarcely known, and the inhabitants almost lived in the open air, diseases were but few.

She had one day wandered some way up the vale searching for her herbs, when, on turning a projection of rock, she came to a spot which she well remembered, from having once reached it with her father by a different path through the wood, and they were then both so struck by the sudden variety of beauty that it presented to their view, that they almost simultaneously began to recite the same piece of poetry, in praise of the creation and the Creator; and it added a reciprocal sympathy of joy, even greater than that they received from the charms of nature, to find that there was that entire communion of feeling in their minds, that the very same words gave utterance to the thoughts of both.

The Hebrew poetry was usually recited in alternate measures. It had peculiarities that

were all its own, it was so exquisite that the saddened soul revived at its sound, and it was consecrated to devotion, and never debased by any meaner theme.

Sephora was affected by the recollection of her former feelings, at thus finding herself unexpectedly on this spot, and she almost unconsciously began the same poem she had spoken there with Patrobus, but when she had finished the first stanza, she stopped. The thought of her father's responsive voice stifled hers; she leaned against the rock, and could say no more.

A silence of something more than a minute succeeded, when a soft inarticulate sound of the sweetest cadence, and of the same metre as that in which she had recited, seemed to reply in answering notes of praise. She repeated the third stanza, and after a pause, was again answered by the same aerial voice. She knew that this could be nothing but the reverberation of her own; yet she pleased herself with thinking that it sounded like her father's, and only reciting the intermediate verses, fancied that he replied.

Some, perhaps, would blame her for gratifying herself in this wilful delusion, but who is there that has not at times suffered their imagination to predominate over their reason, and made themselves happy by some waking dream?

She did not long indulge herself in this reverie, for the western sun, casting its blush down the vale, told her it was time to return. She hastened back, and gathering up her scattered cloaths from the rock, laid them smooth in the paniers. She had no need to call Emmor, for it being past the usual time of going back, he was waiting for her, and had helped himself to the accustomed boon which she never failed to reserve for him out of the basket store.

They now both slowly ascended the winding and obscure path through the wood. All nature was hushed, except two answering nightingales that seemed singing as if for victory of harmonious sound. One would have supposed that the bodies of such little creatures must have expired under such loud, such clear, such redoubled, such mellifluous strains.

What," thought Sephora, " must be the
c of the seraphic choir in heaven, when
l man on earth is entertained with such
dy as this?" Then the idea that her
r was now of that sacred band came to
nind, and drew her into a train of thought
which she was almost too familiar, and
which she could not disengage herself,
he spell was broken by stopping at their
ıge door.

ıen she took off the panniers, and trusted
nor to find his own way to his crib, while
ran to her mother, impatient to see her
an absence of so many hours.

smile for a moment lightened up Pytho-
ı's countenance on her daughter's ap-
ch, but it was soon gone, and she was
wrapped in more than her accustomed
m.

ephora strove all she could to dissipate
ut did not succeed. She set out their
ıle meal with more than common form,
ned the table with the freshest flowers,
ved her the basket of herbs she had ga-
ed, pointed out their beauty, and their

use, and told all the little circumstances of the day.

But her mother heard as if she heard her not, and her mind seemed revolving other thoughts.

Sephora, finding that her own adventures and Emmor's failed to excite any interest, and still hoping to rouse her from her grief, innocently asked her what she had been doing while they were away?

This question, did, indeed, rouse her; she started as if detected in guilt, made some vague general answer in a hurried angry voice, and after changing the subject, and assuming, for a few minutes, the appearance of cheerfulness, again relapsed into gloom.

Sephora next took her harp, played her most soothing and her liveliest airs, and looked inquiringly into her mother's face, to see which attracted her attention the most; but both seemed alike to her. In fact, she heard neither the one nor the other, or if the notes reached her ear, they certainly never touched her mind, which was far differently moved than by the "concord of sweet sounds."

Sephora thought she had observed before this, that on the evening of those days when her occupations obliged her to be absent from home, she had, on her return, found Pythonissa more than usually depressed, and she had often earnestly intreated her to go with her, told her how much more she should enjoy the refreshment of her walks, and how much happier she should be at her work if she had her dear mother sitting by her. And when it was done, how much more comfortable it would be if they had their meal together, instead of each dining alone.

She hoped, by thus putting it, as if she chiefly desired it for her own gratification, to induce her to comply. But she invariably refused her request; and what was extraordinary, though Sephora found her gloom increased after absence, yet Pythonissa never seemed so satisfied, or so near being cheerful, as when her daughter was going to leave her for the day. This continually lightened and cheated poor Sephora's heart with the hope that her mother was going to recover her spirits.

She never doubted but that it was grief for her father's loss that cast this gloom over her mind, she felt how nearly she had herself fallen into a state of listless despondency, she knew by experience how difficult a thing it is to break the habit of grief; and remembering with gratitude the relief which seemed to have been granted to her sorrow in answer to prayer, she resolved the first opportunity to ask her what it was that hung so heavy on her spirits, tell her what the state of her own had been, where she had found alleviation, and urge her also to seek the only true balm for a wounded mind.

These resolutions were easily made, but there was something so repulsive in her mother's manner, that to accomplish them was no easy task, yet she constantly bore the intention in her thoughts, and only waited for a time when she could do it with the least fear of giving offence.

Sephora's mother had never been dearer to her than since this dejection had fallen on her mind, though it was accompanied by an increased apathy of manner towards herself.

She this evening felt unusually anxious about her. The hopes she had indulged in the morning were not only gone, but worse fears succeeded them, which prevented her from sleeping after she had retired to rest, and she kept revolving sad thoughts in her mind, when she was startled by some of the most dismal sounds she had ever heard. They were so different to any that had ever reached her ear before, that she could not even imagine what they were like. She got up and went towards the windows, which in that country are seldom shut; she looked out, but could see nothing unusual. Her room faced the south, the moon shone bright, and the dark shadows of the boughs of the trees falling across each other, gave a more intricate and doubtful appearance to the wood, but nothing seemed to move. Yet here she heard the noises still more distinctly, and they sounded even more strange than they had done before, and seemed less like any thing belonging to the earth.

She trembled exceedingly, and felt herself giving way to a very unbecoming terror, when

remembering where her strength lay, and who it is that has said, " Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you;" she asked of him, whose omnipresence she seldom forgot, to guard her from all danger and to keep her from the fear of it; and she soon felt a real composure of spirit which heroes have sometimes only seemed to possess in the hour of doubt and danger.

It now struck her that it might be some bird which had made this noise. She remembered being very much surprised the first time she heard the dismal notes of the Cucuvaia, when walking late with her father among the rocks, and that he had reproved her for being alarmed, and told her to fear God, and then she need fear nothing besides.

The noise continued at intervals for more than half an hour, but Sephora having in some measure satisfied her mind as to what it might be, lay down again without inquietude, though not with much disposition to sleep. The recollection of the screech owl, brought before her mind the day when she heard it. She remembered getting up

when the mists were not yet cleared from the earth, and going down the steep rocky banks of the river to fetch the bundle of osiers that had been soaking in the stream: then coming into the cottage and putting up their noontide repast, preparing breakfast and sitting down to it with her parents, while the clustering roses oppressed with dew, looked in at the window, but saw no tear or cloud of grief on those within. All then were cheerful and happy, about to separate to their different tasks. Pythonissa to her household cares, and Patrobus and herself to the tending of the flock; each hoping when their work was done to meet again in peace, and end the day as they began it, with prayer and praise.

Memory, almost saw again the dew drops on each flower, and leaf, and spray, as they unpenned their flock and drove them down to pasture;—wove afresh the baskets that must now have fallen to decay—and sat under the shade of leaves long since mingled with the dust, while her father's conversation was imprinted in still more indelible characters on her heart. She had this day got

him to recount to her the earlier part of his life, when he had been called by Antigonus to fight the enemies of his country and resist the claims of Herod to the throne. How did she shudder at the perils he had passed, as he recounted to her the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, and the inhuman butchery that ensued after it was taken, when neither youth, nor age, nor sex found mercy; when the beautiful and virtuous Mariamne failed to calm or mitigate her husband's fury, and rage got the empire of the most idolatrous love.

It is true, that Herod was so far influenced by her intreaties, as to command the carnage to cease; but as this was the only order he ever issued in vain, it was supposed that he secretly approved what he appeared to disclaim. Patrobus had himself escaped by being concealed by some old furniture, while the work of death was going on all around him, and the shrieks of agony, despair, and woe pierced his very soul. In the room where he was hid, he saw a waking infant stretch forth its little arms to meet his advancing murderer, and smile at the ensan-

ned, glittering sword, wet with a mother's
od, and raised to shed its own—yet it
id no mercy.——And when the dreadful
nce, succeeded to the rage of death, and
its awful stillness proclaimed the last
ny's unresisted empire—when he crept
from his concealment, the sights which
vitnessed made him almost wish himself
of such a world.

he first object he saw was that disfigured
nt on its gory bed, whom he had so lately
ı with all the freshness of an opening
rer,; its laughing eye now changed to
ness, and its dimpled smiles to the con-
ıive mortal pang. He went out of this
n only to enter others that presented
n greater spectacles of horror. Slain
ilies were heaped together, children on
mangled bodies of parents that had vainly
d to protect them—wives in their lifeless
bands' arms; while the pallid hue of
th, and the crimson stain of murder added
r dreadful contrast to render the scene
more striking and more full of woe.

ephora sickened at the recital, and the

life that was so near being lost, seem dearer to her than before, while the God w had preserved it in battle, and sheltered from the rage of the destroyer, was mo than ever precious to her soul.

Patrobus said, that he had met but wi one mischance during the siege: a slig wound on the shoulder from one of the Rom arrows; and this he considered more a blessing than as a misfortune, as it had int duced him to a friend, who till he marri was the companion of his heart; but sin then, added Patrobus, though Vashni settled on mount Carmel, yet we h rarely met. I believe, Sephora, it is who have made me so willing to neglect my former friends. I was thinking last ni when I was reading Nathan's parable, t in saying the poor man's lamb was unto l as a daughter, the prophet beautifully pressed in one word every idea that could conveyed, of endearment, of solace, and love. Sephora could not be insensible expressions of affection and approbation fr the lips of such a father, yet the indir

praise his words conveyed, humbled, rather than exalted her, and the tear of gratitude and humility fell on his hand, while she felt herself utterly unworthy of such a parent.

Patrobus again reverting to the siege of Jerusalem, told her that it was impossible to describe the general consternation when it was taken, and that, not merely on account of the loss of it, or the cruelties that were exercised, but because of Herod's being established there as King. In all the various punishments which had been inflicted on them for running after the abominations and idols of the surrounding nations and forsaking the living God; the throne of Judah had never before been filled by a stranger. But while this circumstance struck the greater part of their nation with dismay, he himself, and many others looked upon it as a happy omen of the speedy fulfilment of prophecy, and that the departing of the sceptre from Judah was a token that this was the reign in which the Messiah would appear.

Patrobus then spoke of the conquests of Alexander, and told her that the place where

they then sat was still called the victor's plain, in memory of his having halted there for a few hours, more than three hundred years ago, when he was on his way from Tyre to Jerusalem, where he was going to chastise their nation for refusing to submit to him, and for having nobly answered that they had sworn allegiance to Darius, and could not to another. Alexander having reached Gaza, the Jews hoped he had passed them by, but they were seized with the utmost consternation, when they saw this resistless conqueror, before whom the world seemed to yield, turn again, and come pouring down like a destroying flood on their defenceless city—defenceless shall we call it? Who is so defended as those whom the Almighty surrounds with his shield? To him they went in this hour of need, and from him they received succour.

Jaddua, the high priest, being divinely warned, dressed himself in his pontifical robes and ornaments, the priests in their vestments, and the people in white garments, and issuing out at one of the gates of the

city in solemn procession met his approach on the heights of Sapho that overlooked the town.

Their appearance was singular, but what was the astonishment of Alexander's army to see the insulted conqueror who was come to kill and to destroy, prostrate himself before the high priest, and worship the incommunicable name he bore on his forehead. Then it was if ever, that he was truly great.

Parmenio who knew that the hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and that he turneth them as seemeth him good, asked him with surprise, how it was that he who was adored by every one, adored the high priest of the Jews? To whom he answered, "I do not adore him, but the God whom he worships. For when I was at Dio, a city of Macedonia, while I consulted with myself of the conquest of Asia, I saw in my sleep this man attired as he now is, who bid me go boldly forward and assured me of victory."

Alexander then gave his hand to the high priest and entered the city in the midst of the procession, where he offered sacrifices to

the only true God. And when he was shown the prophecies of Daniel, which speak so circumstantially of him and his victories, his confidence of overcoming the Persians was abundantly confirmed, and he joyfully bid the Jews ask of him what favour they would.

Thus the hours passed on in conversation that interested them till it was time to pen the flock in their fold, when Sephora claimed her father's promise of showing her the rocky dale of Bethshan, where tradition reported, that a great king formerly had his palace, who once making a banquet, and inviting to it all the sorcerers of his country excepting Rab. Mag. the chief of them, he was so stung with rage and jealousy at the neglect, that he turned the palace, the river that ran before it and all within it, and about it into stone. But the familiar spirits that possessed the sorcerers, not being susoeptible of such transformation, they were often heard wailing and complaining in the rock.

This story was considered as a mere fable by the most illiterate; yet Sephora found it impossible to disunite the recollection of it

from the place, and while her reason utterly disclaimed the marvellous tale, her imagination certainly felt its secret though almost unacknowledged influence.

The place was a heap of naked rock, where the blade of vegetation never grew, though surrounded on all sides by fertility. After walking some way through a chasm, they got to a more open place, where the rocks on one side bore some rude resemblance to the gigantic buttresses of a castle. And here it was that she started at the sound of the Cucuvaia's cry, and was chid by her father for her foolish fear. Thus memory, the great magician of the mind, brought back the past and lived it o'er again.

## CHAPTER IV.

SEPHORA determined not to say any thing to her mother of the mysterious noise she had heard in the night, she thought it might have a bad effect on one already so disposed to melancholy, and as Pythonissa had often assured her that she slept perfectly well, she hoped she might not have heard any thing of it herself.

Having settled this, her busy weary thoughts soon began to lose themselves in forgetfulness; she was now with her father in more uncertain scenes, saw the flowery mead suddenly transformed into a mazy wood, while as often as she cleared the sheep from its labyrinths, some scaring sound would drive them back——then they were all penned fast within the fold, and she wandering round and round, unknowing how to let them out.

She had slumbered on for many hours past her usual time of rising, when she was

roused by her mother's opening the door, and asking with a look and tone of more solicitude and affection than she had lately known, if she was well?

Joy and hope sprung like light to Sephora's bosom at hearing again something that sounded like the kindness of a parent's voice.

On her answering she was well, but had not slept the beginning of the night, Pythonissa's looks were again overclouded with gloom, while she cast her dark penetrating eyes with the most suspicious and inquisitive expression on her daughter's countenance, as if she would have read her inmost thought; but finding nothing there but sorrow, that her mother should be still such a prey to grief, she sat down buried in deep and gloomy meditation; when Sephora, throwing herself on her knees before her, and taking her hands within her own, said, "Oh, my dear mother, how can you suffer these thoughts to oppress you? I think I know what you feel, for I was once myself so near sinking into this state."

"You, Sephora! when?" exclaimed Pythonissa, as she started back and pushed her from her with surprise, while a smile, (if that could be called a smile, which had in it more of malignancy than benevolence,) distorted her features.

"When, mother!" said Sephora meekly, "when my poor father died, and for some months after; but I felt, that to indulge in such sorrow was to rebel against the decrees of God. I asked to be delivered from it, and he burst the cords of grief that bound my soul. I asked him to show me the way wherein I should go, and he became a light to my paths.—Pray to him to comfort you as he has comforted me—pray to him for his Holy Spirit—pray to him that you may more entirely place your trust on that promised Redeemer, who will make "reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness."

"No," said Pythonissa faintly, "I cannot pray:" and she rose to go, but Sephora detaining her hands, said, "Do you say, that you cannot pray, my mother; Oh then, I

beseech you, as I would if I saw the yawning gulph of destruction opening beneath your feet, that you go not out of this room till you have fallen down before the Almighty, and asked him for a new heart and a new spirit. Ask it as a famishing soul would a morsel of bread; ask it as a condemned criminal would sue to his monarch for his life. His is a throne of royal mercy, at which none ever begged in vain. Our God is long suffering, ready to pardon, and slow to anger, of great kindness, and not willing that any should perish."

Pythonissa seemed much agitated, and said with great emotion—some other time; I cannot now, indeed I cannot now, Sephora.

Her daughter did not dare to detain her any longer; but when she had left the room, she poured forth the fervent desires of her own soul, and by petitions washed in tears and urged by sighs, carried her reluctant mother to the gates of heaven; like the famed chief, who bore his feeble lingering parent far from Ilium's flaming towns and crashing palaces, and laid him safe on Ida's peaceful height.

The consciousness of having performed a painful and difficult duty which she had long wished to discharge; the hope that her prayer might be heard, and above all, the comfort she felt from having cast her care upon one who was able to succour her, shed unutterable peace over her mind, and she arose from her knees, serene, consoled, and invigorated.

The sun, in the material world, when he calmly breaks forth after the lowering storm is past, and sheds his radiant beams on all the myriad liquid gems of light, when nature puts on more than the freshness of her vernal beauty; when every herb yields incense, and the air is all one mingling mass of breathing sweets.—Even this conveys but an imperfect image of that joyful renovation which the mourning soul experiences, when it has carried all its sorrows, and laid them on the bosom of its God.

When Pythonissa and Sephora met they said but little, and neither of them reverted to what had passed. No two minds could exhibit a more complete contrast than theirs

Lid this morning, the first all tumult, and the ast all peace.

It shows how little happiness consists in exterior things, for in regard to these they were both alike. It also shows how easily a hurrying world, that only looks for happiness where it sees a glare, may be mistaken in the judgment it forms of the wretched and the joyful. Pythonissa, notwithstanding the commotion of her mind, seemed less sad than usual. The very conflict of her soul took off from that dark stillness of thought that usually involved her; while her daughter felt such a heavenly calm within her breast, that a casual observer might have mistaken the profoundness of her peace for a rooted sorrow.

Sephora's work lay this day in her garden, which lost all its superior neatness when Patrobus died. For many months after that event it was entirely neglected; and when Sephora first entered it, she thought she saw in it an image of her own disordered mind. Here the hasty growing weeds had quite usurped and overwhelmed the ground where

the useful vegetable had been sown. The ... —the unsustained rank crops had fallen ... the ground in heaps on each other, matted ... and decaying by their own luxuriance. The ... smooth mown walk, now waving with grass; ... the gardening tools, once so polished by the ... brightening hand of labour, now dark, and ... rough with slothful rust; the arborous retreat ... from mid-day toil where industry had so often ... reposed, now almost denied an entrance to ... the weary, for the honeysuckle, the vine, and ... the rose seemed to have conspired together ... to close its flowery porch. All proclaimed, ... that this spot once had a master, but that he ... was now no more.

Sephora set herself to rectify these evils, but they almost mocked her toil. She had no one to assist her in any of her domestic concerns but one old servant, who had been born in their family, and had passed his life in its service, the best part of which was now gone by; if that part may be called the best which is most distinguished by bodily vigour and unabated activity. But if the looking back on a long, useful, though humble course;

and forward to a well-grounded hope of a happy immortality ought to be more esteemed, then, the best part of Zepho's life still remained. This faithful servant had known Patrobus from his birth, and Sephora listened with delight to all the stories he was fond of telling of her father's boyish days. It was true he had not much novelty in his anecdotes, but he made up in repetition what he wanted in variety. Some few things seemed written on the old man's brain as with an iron pen, and they, like ancient chieftains, still dressed in the fashion of their youth, boldly kept their ground, and suffered no intruder to molest them. He had told the same stories without varying a single word, or missing a single syllable, for the last forty years; and surely no garrulous narrator ever had a more attentive auditor than Sephora. She listened with unwearied interest to the many times told tale of how Patrobus first lisped out Zepho's name, as he was carrying home a wounded kid; and how he looked, and how the tears came in his meekened eye as he stroked the suffering

creature. Then the old man would point out the exact spot where they stood, and Sephora almost fancied that she saw her father in the swathes of infancy. Even the history of his boyish days, that age of mischief, noise, and sportive vacancy, partook much of the gentle and thoughtful character of his after life; though instances were not wanting of more heroic achievements.

One of the most favourite narrations began by relating how fearlessly Patrobus, when only twelve years old, pursued a wolf that had attacked their flock. But as this history became much more extended, and ended by proclaiming how Zepho himself had finally subdued the depredator, it may be doubted whether his young master's fame or his own was nearest to his heart when he gave this detail. But be this as it may, Sephora listened to it always with attention and complacency.

Since the death of Patrobus, or at least since that period when his daughter resumed her habits of industry, this old man had chiefly been employed in tending the flock

that Sephora might not be so detached from her mother. But after they were penned in the fold, he used to come and do the rougher work of the garden.

No one was more ready for exertion and labour than Zepho, but the will in him was far beyond the power: yet he seemed to forget that his strength was decayed, and talked with all the vigour of youth, as he stood and looked round on his work; but when he had turned over a few spadesful of earth, he went on more feebly, and when he rested for breath, his thoughts wandered back to the past, he almost forgot what he was about; and such a confusion came over his mind, that he scarcely knew which of the three generations in whose service he had been successively employed, he was now working for; while he quite forgot that he was then standing still and exerting himself for none of them.

Zepho never seemed astonished or distressed at the little progress he made in his work; and yet, when he began his next evening's labour, he always talked as largely as before of what he should do.

With only such an assistant, much of the beauty and much of the use of the garden depended on Sephora; for her mother now never assisted her; but what was her joy this morning, as she raised her head from tying up a trailing azalea, to see Pythonissa standing by her, and hear her ask what work she could do.

Sephora's thoughts glanced round the garden with a spirit's swiftness, to see what there was to do, that was most likely to amuse, and least liable to fatigue her. At last she fixed on the bed of choicest flowers, which she asked her to clear from weeds; while she herself prepared some ground for seeds, and often, as she was thus engaged, she stole a look from her work to cast on her mother; and when she saw gloominess overspreading her countenance, she blamed herself for the employment she had given her, for she feared those flowers which had been the pride of the garden might too forcibly recall the past.

The plants that grew there were not such as were commonly found in that part of Palestine. They had been collected by

Patrobus in his various annual visits to Jerusalem at the season of the Passover.

At these times he generally varied his route, and by that means was well acquainted with most parts of his country, nor did he find his heart the less disposed to celebrate his Creator's mercy, from surveying more of the beauty, the bounty, and the magnificence of his works.

Sephora knew the history of all these plants and the places where they grew. On her father's return after these yearly separations, as soon as the first joy of meeting was over, the next delight was to search the scrip for the new plants, and learn from whence they came, and all that he had seen while away.

Here were assembled the native of the arid rock and luxurious plain, the springing valley and the Alpine height, the sombrous wood and free born wild, the margin of the fertile stream and sandy shore, that counts the dashing of the ceaseless waves. All these had met together on this level bed, though each in its peculiar soil.

Here Sephora, as in a book, would read her father's travels, and had often made him smile, by reminding him of circumstances connected with the gathering of these plants, or the places where they grew, which he had himself forgotten, but which her fond affection and youthful memory had treasured up.

This bed of flowers had been her earliest care, when first she resumed her habits of diligence; and though every part of the garden teemed with endearing recollections, this was the spot of ground she loved the best; and knowing how many tender thoughts were connected with it in her own mind, and seeing her mother look sad, she naturally concluded it might have the same kind of influence over hers, and from the peculiar depression she laboured under, that it might make her feel more of the anguish than the luxury of grief.

She, therefore, asked her to change employments with her, hoping by this means to break the chain of her gloomy meditations.

Pythonissa seemed mechanically to accept her daughter's offer. She took the rake

from her, and moved it backwards and forwards, but evidently without any consideration of what she was doing; and Sephora on taking her work, found that she had latterly indiscriminately rooted up both flowers and weeds.

She looked among the rubbish for her favourites, and her tears fell fast upon them as she placed them again in the ground. But whether it was the disordered state of her mother's mind, or seeing her father's beloved work destroyed, or the thought of the mouldering hand that first had planted them, that pressed upon her heart and made her weep, we cannot say. Tears are often a compound, as well as a simple, and the most subtle alchymist cannot always trace them to their source.

## CHAPTER V.

PYTHONISSA, notwithstanding her fit of gloomy absence, certainly seemed much better this day than she had lately done. She sought, instead of shunning her daughter's company, and at night, asked what was her work for the morrow, as she intended to help her again.

Sephora, delighted to hear her say this, answered, that she had intended to gather olives, but there were several other things nearer home that wanted doing, and she should like that employment best that her mother felt most inclined for. Pythonissa had no choice, so it was decided that they should go for the olives.

The finest grew about two miles from their cottage, on the borders of a small lake, and this was the place they always went to, to gather them. The direct road to it lay by the tomb of Patrobus, but Sephora was afraid it would

be too much for her mother's spirits to go by a place that would naturally awaken such sorrowful recollections. Yet she did not shun to pass this spot herself, for she felt it a luxury rather than a grief to walk slowly by it, or to linger for a moment near the mournful cave.

Not that she sought for the living among the dead. She knew that her father was not there. When she thought of him, (and she was seldom long without thinking of him,) her fancy followed him to heaven, and not to the tomb. Yet did this narrow dwelling recall many retrospective visions that were pleasing to her mind, faded, it might be that they sometimes were by distance, or still oftener dimmed by tears, but still they were pleasant visions.

Man is certainly a ruminating animal in his mental if not in corporeal powers. He can call back the swallowed joy, and beguile his dreary hours with the cud of happiness. This was a food which Sephora well knew, and for which she had often been grateful. It

had not, it is true, that poignancy that hope, rather than experience, gives to the untasted pleasure. But then it was unmixed with those drops of bitterness which generate the disappointed sigh, and make us half loathe the longed for cup of bliss.

The lake on the banks of which the olives grew, communicated with, and indeed terminated at one end the valley of contending streams. Sephora proposed that they should go through the valley to it; that they should descend the path through the wood behind the cottage, and pursue the course of the brook till they came to the lake. And to prevent her mother from being tired by going this circuitous route, advised her to ride to the olive ground on the ass, (who was always a principal personage in these expeditions, for he carried the fruit,) and then she would only have to walk back again.

This was agreed to, and on the morrow they breakfasted together comfortably, if not cheerfully, and set forward for their work. Pythonissa and Emmor first, and Sephora

following with the basket of provisions slung on the crook over her shoulder, which she took to shake and bend down the olive boughs, and in her left hand a bundle of fishing poles with net-pouches attached to the ends of them, to lay in the lake and entrap its heedless habitants.

They took the path that led immediately to the place where the echo was that had delighted Sephora so much by its unexpected reply. She reminded her mother of it as they were going along, and said she should like for her to hear it. And just as she got there, the idea struck her that she might take that opportunity of saying something that would be likely to excite devotion in her mother's mind.

The Hebrew language, from the various modifications of its melodious sounds was easily susceptible of a kind of unpremeditated verse, for which Sephora had a natural talent, and with a mind well stored with sacred lore, and a most ardent desire to see her mother restored to permanent comfort, she immediately began.

O God, thou art my God, praise waiteth for thee. How manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all. Thou sendest forth thy spirit and they are created, thou lookest on the earth and it trembleth, thou touchest the hills and they smoke.

The Lord hath his way in the tempest, and the storm and the clouds of the heaven are the dust of his feet. The rafters of his pavilion are hid in the waters, and he walks on the swiftest wings of the wind. Who can stand before his indignation, who can abide the fierceness of his anger? The vineyards of Carmel would languish at his presence. The sweet flowers of Lebanon would utterly fade away.

Yet is his mercy greater than his indignation, and his loving-kindness far exceeds the fierceness of his displeasure. He extends the golden sceptre rather than the glittering spear, and calls to us to have pity on ourselves. Why will ye die, ye house of Israel?

We were as scattered sheep in a dark and cloudy day. We were as harts that found no pasture, and panted for the water brooks.

Our chain was heavy, and our sighs were deep, the daughters of music were brought low, and thou didst call, as in a solemn day, thy terrors round about us. Those things were gone that were pleasant to our eyes, and the Comforter that should have relieved our soul was far from us.

Yet dost thou not willingly afflict the children of men, nor wilt thou suffer thy truth to fail. Though for a little moment thou mayst hide thy face, yet with everlasting mercies wilt thou have compassion on all who seek thee. Turn then again, ye prisoners of hope, for the Lord hath broken the chain of your sins, turn to the Lord, and search out your inmost ways, bring out the accursed thing and slay it before him, let not thy soul spare the least iniquity.

The floods of light shall break in upon thy ravished soul, and the mountain stream shall be less pure than him whom the Lord hath cleansed. He shall clothe thee with robes of righteousness, and thou shalt stand before his throne for ever.

The wicked shall be chased before him

like the chaff which the storm carrieth away, and as the down of the thistle before the whirlwind. Yet the everlasting hills are less stedfast than his love, and when the foundations of the world are as though they had never been, the just shall still stand in his sight.

Pythonissa listened with attention, and when the echo answered to the third stanza, she burst into tears. It was long since she had been so affected, and Sephora saw her with gratitude in this more softened state. Yet she would not appear to observe it, neither would she weaken those impressions, which she hoped would be working good in her mother's mind, by speaking of inferior things, and she followed her walking silently, though not companionless through the winding valley.

She heard the voice of the creation uttering the praise of the Creator. The rocks fringed with the many coloured leaves of autumn; the bold cliffs presenting all the varied lines of nature; the hills crowned with waving pines, and decked with odorous

shrubs; the clear silent stream that scarcely seemed to flow; the dewy flowers that grew along its banks, on which the industrious bee flew from bell to bell, and painted butterflies expanded and closed their glittering wings; the goats and antelopes, that seemed to breathe the very air of liberty, some peeping into the vale below, others skipping from crag to crag, or browsing on the dizzy height. All these objects seen through the medium of a grateful heart, made her find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and God in everything."

Nor was the lake itself an object incapable of yielding delight and instruction. It lay in the bosom of a stately amphitheatre of hills that rose almost perpendicularly from its margin, sheltering it from the ruffling breeze, and keeping it in perfect peace like him whose mind is stayed upon his God. While the liquid mirror adorned and honoured its protector by reflecting back the everlasting heights that tranquillized it.

Often, though, was this beautiful image

looked for in vain. The falling tempest deformed the surface of the reflector, or the wintry torrent stirred up the turbid foundation till not a vestige of its calm beauty remained.

Sephora had often contemplated this lake, and thought that it presented but too just and too mournful a picture of her own inconstant soul, that sometimes seemed peaceful and benign as its Creator and Preserver, and sometimes was tossed with tumultuous passions, as if it had never known his image or his love.

On the top of that hill, round whose base the olives grew, and almost inaccessible from its steepness, was a cavern called the lunatic's den. It had formerly been inhabited for many years by one who professed the Essean philosophy.

The Esseans were one of the most famous sect of the Jews. They had all things in common, they all dressed alike, and were clothed entirely in white. The utmost cleanliness prevailed amongst them, and they practised almost monkish austerities. When they spoke it was always in turn, they never

swore, and lived by rule and not according to inclination. They held adversity in contempt, they believed in the immortality of the soul, and thought that after death the good lived beyond the ocean seas, in a place of pleasure, where they are never molested with rain, nor snow, nor heat, but have always a sweet and pleasant air coming out of the ocean, but that the souls of the wicked go to a very tempestuous place, always full of the lamentation of those that are to be punished.

The man who had lived in the den, had entered this society and brought a large possession to its common stock; but no one could trace where he came from, or what had been his former life. He was not at first deranged in his mind, but overwhelmed either with grief or remorse, and he seemed to seek in the strictness and outward purity of this sect, relief for a wounded mind. But finding none, he quitted society, and hid himself in this den, living only on the spontaneous fruits of the earth, and never laying

up any winter store. He had picked out the sharpest stones of the brook and laid them for his couch, and he fled from the face of man.

Patrobus when a boy had often attempted to speak to him, and had many times contrived to cross his path. But he only turned his eyes wildly or mournfully on him, shook his head, or brandished his arm, and fled, or stalked away, according as his humour then happened to be.

Once, and only once, when he followed him with looks and words of sorrow, the maniac turned with a benignant smile, and raised his withered hand over the stripling's glossy hair as if to bless him, but suddenly withdrawing it, began to wound himself with briars and flints, as if he mourned some broken vow, as if to have heard and felt the voice of pity had been some deadly monstrous crime.

This poor unfortunate had often been seen on moon-light nights, (at which time his disorder raged the most,) the pale beams falling

on his snowy raiment, walking frantically down the valley, and looking like its troubled spirit. At these times he would gather deadly herbs and crush them for their juice. Then he would return with a slow step dragging a heavy fragment of the rock to the borders of the lake, look cautiously and fearfully round and plunge it in, while the lunatic answered the sullen dash of the waters with a groan of horror.

At other times he walked with folded arms that rested on his breast, as if an infant nestled there, then danced them in the air, then stood amazed as if he had let something drop, then suddenly scratching up the earth would dig a hole, and heaping it again, would shape it like a baby's grave, and strew it thick with lilies and mountain thyme. Then would he sit down beside it, and rest his fevered brain upon his burning hand, and there his watchers left him.

These little graves were often found up and down the valley, covered with half faded flowers, and claiming the tribute of a starting

tear or passing sigh for the afflicted being who raised them.

In other parts were seen mangled heaps of hemlock, and bundles of the deadly night-shade with its mournful drooping bells, crushed between two stones. And thus it was made doubtful whether it were crime or sorrow that most preyed upon his mind. But be it which it might, it called for compassion. Man, proud man, forgets to pass sentence on the wretch whose soul is torn by remorse. At the sound of his groans, Justice drops her sword, the fillet falls from her brow, and her stern looks are changed at once to those of dove-eyed pity.

This poor creature's weight of grief was often in Patrobus' thoughts, though he was then of an age not apt to think of sorrow. He used to scatter food for him in the valley at times when the earth produced no fruit. He sought for him one winter when the weather had been more than usually severe, and he had not seen him in any of his usual haunts, he feared he might suffer from famine.

He climbed up to his den, but found him not; his flinty couch seemed to have been lately set with sharper stones, that bore the bleeding marks of self-inflicted torture. He looked up and down the valley, and inquired for him among the neighbouring shepherds, but no one could tell any thing of him. Some supposed that he had destroyed himself, and others, that he had retreated to some more cheerless spot. This lake indeed looked more like the abode of spotless innocence, than torturing guilt; yet probably the poor maniac chose the place as most suitable to nourish penitence and remorse, and this tranquil lake that presented to the untroubled mind nothing but images of peaceful beauty, might, if connected in his conscience with circumstances of guilt, seem to him as the very mouth of hell. Yet probably time and familiarity with the object, had weakened the keenness of his first sensations, and his restless spirit might seek relief in more intense sufferings.

Alas! that any should not know who alone binds up the wounded mind, and heals by

pouring in the balm of his most precious blood; but that we must still, with more than Sysiphian labour, be seeking to cure ourselves, and vainly hope, being made perfect through our virtues or our sufferings, to claim a purchased title to the skies.

## CHAPTER VI.

SEPHORA had often listened with all the avidity of youth for the wonderful, to the history of this mysterious man, and this day, having from her mother's assistance, finished her work much sooner than usual, the fancy struck her of scrambling up to the den, and sometimes by catching hold of the tufts of heath or yellow broom, sometimes by setting her foot on the roots of the olives that had fantastically twisted themselves above the earth, she climbed up to it; but when she got there, found nothing in particular to reward her toil, but the pleasure of having overcome difficulties.

The cavern was much like a hundred others she had seen, and there was nothing to make it interesting but the recollection of the wretched being who had inhabited it. Two little panting kids, which seemed as if they had tired themselves with play, had now got

possession of it, and were lying down in the extremity of its deep shade, but on Sephora's entering rose up, and half in frolick, half in fright, bounded past her, and perched themselves upon a jutting crag to watch her movements. She could not help contrasting this playful scene with the misery with which this rocky den must formerly have groaned, and each seemed heightened by being set in opposition to the other. She was soon ready to descend the hill again to her mother, but first stopped a few moments at the mouth of the cave to look at that extended prospect, which must have given the poor recluse such an ample view of the world he had quitted.

Towers and misty cities, woods and rivers, hill and dale, plains covered with browsing flocks, corn fields thick with sheaves, and echoing with the voice of labour, cloud-capped mountains, and the far extended distant main were spread before her; while the tranquil lake lay stretched beneath her feet, surrounded by its fringed and verdant ramparts. Such a scene might well induce

her to linger; she could have looked on it with delight for hours, but she thought that perhaps her mother would be impatient for her return, and would not indulge herself by remaining any longer.

She found yet more difficulty in descending the hill, than she had in climbing it, and wondered how the poor lunatic could so often have got up and down in safety. When she reached the bottom, the sun was declining, and tinging the western clouds with gold and purple. It was time for them to be going home, she took up her fishing poles from the water, and with them many of the finny beauties of the lake, which, as they floundered on the ouzy bank, showed all the varying colours of that hand that dyed the peacock's plumes. Then fastening the covered baskets on the ass, she put in the olives, and spread grass over them, on which she laid the fish, and thus all things were quickly arranged for their return. She proposed to her mother to go back the way they came; but Pythonissa would not agree to it, and preferred the nearer path. Se-

phora tried to dissuade her from it, but could not; so when they had gone about half a furlong through the valley, they turned short to the left through a gap in the rock called the pass of Hadessa, and ascended the wood by a gradual acclivity, till they came to their family burying ground. It was a clear space in the centre of the wood, bordered in part by low rocks which had been excavated for tombs, and in part by ancient trees that stretched their umbrageous branches over them, and looked as if they might have seen many successive generations deposited beneath their shades. Sephora scarcely knew that she breathed as she entered this spot. The fear of the effect it might have on her mother, added to what she always felt as she trod this sacred ground, quite harrowed up her mind with doleful thought. They walked quietly across the grassy court that scarcely heard their footfall. No sound was there, "or none that hindered thought." The whisperings of the evening breeze that swept over the top of the trees, and the murmurings of the ringdoves that had built their

nests in the cypress that shaded her father's tomb, were all that was heard, and these sounded more like the *hush* than the voice of nature.

She looked towards the hallowed cave, and saw the ferns and briony had already sprung up and half concealed the stone that closed it. She well remembered her sensations when she saw that stone placed there, and the mournful procession turned again to seek their empty dwelling. She feared that her mother must feel these sad recollections even more than she herself did, and she did not dare to look towards her till they had again immerged into the wood; when she cast a look of apprehension on her, expecting to see her overcome with gloomy sadness; but it was no such thing, her countenance expressed nothing but its usual inanity, when not sunk in mournful thought or roused by peevishness and anger, for the soft and gentle passions seldom animated it.

Sephora, though relieved from her fears, felt half dissatisfied to see no sign of fond recollection, no token of departed happiness

as she passed that spot where so much of her own lay entombed. She was much surprised too at this indifference, and began to muse in her mind whether it could be grief for her father's loss that occasioned the dejection of her mother. She knew of no other cause for sorrow, yet it was strange that she should pass his grave for the first time, as far as she knew, since he had been laid in it, without any apparent remembrance of him. But she tried to drive away perplexing thought, and only to feel thankful that whatever the cause of her mother's gloom might be, she had been free from it this day. She did not doubt but change of scene, and having had some occupation to employ her mind, had very much contributed to her greater cheerfulness, and as she knew that their rural works, would in a few weeks be chiefly over; that the olives would be gathered in—the corn-fields cleared—and the time of the vintage past—she began considering what would be most likely to afford permanent employment and amusement during the winter season. She

thought their old and long neglected occupation of wicker-work would most probably interest her. She immediately proposed it by turning to her, and saying, she should like to begin their basket-making again, and asked her mother if she would go with her on the morrow after the next, to cut some of the autumnal shoots of the osier.

The day following was the sabbath, it was also the tenth of the month Tisri, the great day of atonement, the day on which the high priest, throwing aside his golden robes, sent away the scape-goat into the wilderness laden with all the sins of the children of Israel—the day on which he afterwards resumed his priestly vestments, and was admitted within the veil into the holiest of holies.

Sephora felt that this was a day much to be observed to the Lord; she kept it by fasting, in silence, solitude, and devotion. She communed with her own heart in her chamber, and was still. She sought out her spirit, and compared it with the holy law of God. Where is the heart that does not in-

stinctively shrink from such a scrutiny? Where is the heart that will stand before the shining of the candle of the Lord, and discover no pollution there? No crossed pride, no cankering care, no painted vanity, no gilded pomp, no tainted vice, no slanderous breath, no black ingratitude to God or man, no withering envy, no unhallowed love, no niche in which some earthly idol is enshrined, that claims the secret homage of the soul, to which the willing thoughts resort, towards which they press, and throng, and prostrate themselves, and there remaining, cleave to the sordid or the sensual lust.—Where is the heart that can say, I am wholly free from all these things?

Wherever it might be, Sephora felt too surely it was not with her. She compared herself with the most careless and the most sinful of her fellow-creatures, and could not tell but they might be acting more up to their ideas of what was right than she was to hers, and if so, which was the most guilty? She found no satisfaction on reflecting on her own worth, or in comparing

herself with that of others, her only comfort was to sit low at the Almighty's feet, and trust to his swift winged and overshadowing mercy, for bearing away all her sins into the land of forgetfulness, and throwing over her trembling soul the veil of his own righteousness and glory.

## CHAPTER VII.

PYTHONISSA had agreed to go on the morrow to the osier groves, but when the morning came it was rainy, and they employed themselves in their household concerns till noon, when the sun dispelling the clouds, and shining with animating lustre on the refreshed earth, they, as soon as their dinner was over, set out towards the place where the willows grew, turning to the right along the verge of the shaggy banks of the river. They had not gone far before they heard the sound of music borne along by the stream. Sephora guessed that it was the hymeneal minstrelsy of one of her young friends, whose marriage she had been invited to attend, but which she had refused to do, because she did not like to leave her mother. They soon saw the procession coming towards them, and another advancing in a contrary direction on the opposite bank of the river. Both of

these bands were alike, excepting that the one carried lamps in their hands, and the other instruments of music. They each consisted of ten girls, habited in white, with flowing hair, and chaplets of flowers on their head, and their wrists and ancles encircled with chains of gold, and hung round with bells. The one advancing towards them was playing on various instruments of music, and moving in graceful dance, to which their tinkling ornaments sounded harmonious time. They preceded the betrothed bride, who, covered with a veil that almost met the ground, walked slowly between her father and mother. The two first and two last of the virgin minstrels played on the timbrels, and the three other pair on the pipe, the sistrum, and the dulcimer. Sometimes they performed altogether, sometimes in succession; then the instruments paused, and their voices raised the hymeneal hymn, which was a sort of prayer for the happiness of the married. The parents' voice did not join in this, but doubtless their hearts were

not mute, and there was a melody there which was heard in heaven.

When the procession came opposite to where the other was stationed, the music and dancing ceased, while the bride and her parents took leave, and fell into each other's arms with speechless anguish and affection. Who could have supposed that this was the accomplished wish, the moment they had all been looking forward to as the consummation of their desires.

Perhaps we are often more strikingly convinced of the insufficiency of human felicity in the possession of our hopes, than we are in the fulfilment of our fears. The best gifts of life are rather an exchange than an unconditional acquisition of happiness, and we shall generally find that some darling comfort is to be resigned, some Ishmael and his mother to be thrust into the wilderness, when the child of promise is received.

Sephora waited to see her friend conveyed by her husband to a boat decked with flowers, which wafted her over the river, and then go

forwards with still more faltering steps towards his abode, preceded by the opposite band, while her own friends turned back, and walked half joyfully, half disconsolately, towards the dwelling which they now thought had lost its dearest ornament.

Sephora and Pythonissa went with them as far as their road lay in the same direction, and then went forwards towards the place where the osiers grew. It was a sort of chasm on the banks of the Kishon, where the waters being unconfined by their usual bounds, they at flood-time flowed up the country, and made that marshy kind of ground in which the willow likes to grow. Several turf-built huts, shaded by oak and palm trees, stood on a gently rising ground by the side of the osier beds.

Sephora had scarcely begun her work, when a little boy came running to her out of one of them, and asked her to come and see his grandfather, who was very ill, and they feared going to die. She readily obeyed this summons, and following her conductor,

entered a miserable cottage, where sickness, poverty, and hopeless grief seemed to have taken up their abode. How glorious to be sought for as the instrument of turning out such inmates; how delightful, to bring comfort to the disconsolate; nay, even the attempt is happiness, though not crowned with success. We can bear defeat and disppointment in such a cause. The wounds of pity do not rankle like those of pride, but yield a soothing balm that assuages all its own grief even when it fails to alleviate that of others. The cabin into which Sephora now entered consisted of one large room, crowded with inhabitants, and littered over with dust, broken furniture: the walls and floor were of mud, and there was nothing more like a ceiling than the naked rafters.

The rain which had fallen in the morning had penetrated the roof in several places, and made the ground below quite plashy; yet beneath this leaky thatch, the kind affections and the social virtues throve, more than they often do in the stately gilded palace. In the

centre of this humble dwelling stood the stem of an oak, which seemed to form the chief support of the building, and round this were hung several fishing nets in different stages of progress, with the needles dangling to them. Skeins and balls of packthread were suspended still higher; and a pruning hook leaned against this rustic pillar, and seemed to have been employed in removing the work from one place to another, and taking down the twine to replenish the exhausted needles.

In one corner of the room stood a table, with the cold remains of their slender, but almost untasted meal. Two little children, who could scarcely reach to help themselves, one with a large knife in its hand, and the other with a crust of black bread, were dragging about the provisions, while a thin hungry looking dog, with his head laid sideways on the table, was licking the unsavoury platter. No one was attending to this scrambling group: the elder members of the family were all assembled round a tattered bed, on which lay a venerable looking old man. His sight

was gone; and every feature was strongly marked with the deep ridge and furrow of age; yet there was something in his appearance that excited admiration rather than disgust. The top of his head was bald; but his hoary hairs, (that crown of glory if found in the way of righteousness,) hung in waving ringlets round his face, and shaded his pallid countenance. On one side stood his daughter holding an infant in one arm, while with the other hand she strove to adjust his pillow, so that his weary head might find rest on it. His son sat below her on the corner of the bed, with his face bowed down, vainly striving to conceal his tears, for his sobs were audible. Two boys and three girls of different ages, stood mournfully round their beloved grandfather, looking with anguish on his dying form.

Sephora, whose sympathy was always ready for the unfortunate, was much affected at this scene. The poor old man could scarcely speak, and seemed ready to faint; he had not eaten for several days, and nature was nearly exhausted.

Sephora had nothing with her, but she thought some of the cordials she had at home might bring relief to him; or if not to him, to his distressed family, who had nothing to offer that could comfort them even with the hope of doing him good. She hesitated for a moment about leaving her mother, but one of the girls promised to stay with her, and help her to cut the osiers while she went for the medicine.

The house was more than a mile off; but Sephora was always active, and her feet never moved with greater swiftness than when on some errand of mercy. She was soon there, and ran immediately into her mother's room, where she kept her store of simples; but here she was so surprised, that she almost forgot what it was that she came for; for on opening the door, the first thing she saw was a tall black looking man, standing in the middle of the room. His dress was of a different kind from any she had ever seen before, and his physiognomy was to the full as singular as his garb: dark, overarching eye brows; a long bushy beard, and a coun-

tenance that expressed all the cunning and malignant passions.

A being altogether so singular and wild in his appearance and demeanour, would have startled her in any situation, much more in this. He, on his part, seemed in almost equal confusion at seeing her; though he could not be aware of the terror his presence had inspired, for her face was quite concealed by her wimple. He told her he was a traveller, who had called to see her father and mother, whom he had formerly known, and finding no one in the first room he went into, he had walked into the others to see if any one was at home. Sephora told him where he might find her mother if he would return with her: this he declined doing, and also to tell his name, saying, he should most likely call again on his return from the journey he was at present going on.

They went out of the cottage together, but took different roads; the traveller struck into the wood, and Sephora went along the banks of the river. She hastened on to make up for the time she had lost in talking to the

stranger, who at least more than divided her thoughts with the poor dying old man.

She was soon out of sight of the cottage, but when she had gone some distance where a bend in the Kishon gave another view of it, she turned her head, scarcely knowing what she looked round for, when she thought she saw part of the stranger's black mantle just floating into the cottage again. She did not like the appearance of this mysterious being, and felt rather uncomfortable at the idea of his going to their cottage again, when he must know that no one was at home in it. However, she pursued her way with her bottle of medicine till she reached the turf cabin, when she had the satisfaction to see it revive the poor old man, and raise the drooping spirits of a weeping family. He was soon so much recovered as to be able to sit up in his bed and talk to her. He asked who she was; and when he heard it was the daughter of Patrobus who had succoured him, it seemed like another cordial to his heart. He said he had known him well, that he had served under him at the siege of Jerusalem, at which

time he lost his sight. A stone from one of the Roman war engines struck out one of his eyes, and a fever followed, during which he lost the use of the other: that throughout this illness, Patrobus was so kind and attentive to him, that he was more like his servant than his master, and he got his friend Vashni to come and see him, and try what he could do for the recovery of his eye-sight; but that their joint care was unavailing; it did not please God to restore him the blessing of vision; his life only was spared; and as soon as he was sufficiently recovered to bear a removal, he was sent into the country through the gate opening into the narrow valley of Acre, which the enemy had not then been able to get possession of; that Patrobus had stayed out the remainder of the siege; but, when war was over, and he returned to his patrimonial possessions, they had occasionally seen each other, and talked over old times. "I remember in particular," said the old man, "his coming here one Sabbath with the book of Isaiah in his hand, and beginning to unroll it, he said he was

come to read it to me, and make me a partaker of the best gift he inherited from his forefathers. I thanked him, but told him I did not wish to hear it; that I knew the commandments, and many good texts from the phylacteries of the Pharisees; that I had never done harm to any man; and this was learning and religion enough for me. I have often since wondered at myself, that I should be so ill mannered as to refuse to hear him; to be sure he had cause enough to be offended, considering how much I had formerly been obliged to him, and that he was so much above me in life, and had taken this trouble on my account. But, instead of showing any anger, he took my hand, and said with a voice of affection that I seem still to hear, 'Nicanor, you think that you have religion enough, but you may not always think so; you may perhaps live to feel the want of a peace of heart which this book could teach you how to obtain; should that time ever come, send for me; we have been fellow soldiers in the turmoils of this life—our lot is now cast together in these more peaceful

scenes—and I hope we shall be compatriots in that glorious world that lies beyond the grave.——Nicanor, if ever I should get there, (as through the merits of my promised Redeemer I do not doubt but I shall,) I think I should be sorry to miss you.'

"There was something so tender and compassionate in his voice and manner, that, as he gently shut the door, I felt the tears start to my sightless eyes. It seemed then, and for long, long afterwards, as if it was the mere affection of his words that made them stay by me: but latterly, the import of them has been much on my mind; for I have felt the want of that peace he spoke of, but the time for sending for him is past.——Oh! how often have I steeped my pillow with bitter tears, as this sad thought has weighed down my heart. I thought then that I not only knew, but had kept the commandments; and I trusted to this for bringing me peace at the last.

"But, during this illness, when age and infirmities have both given me warning that I shall shortly be seen here no more, I see

my own character and conduct in a light in which I have never seen them before. I now see plainly that I have not loved God with all my heart, nor my neighbour as myself. The more I think of these commandments, the more I perceive how often I have transgressed them; and indeed I am most puzzled to find when I have kept them. My dear family here all try to comfort me, and tell me what a good husband, and father, and grandfather I have been; but these kind things that they say seem only to glance over my mind and leave no consolation behind them. Oh! if my dear friend and master had but tarried a little longer upon earth, he might have pointed out to me the paths of peace, and I should have followed his track to the realms of endless bliss. But I refused to be shown, I refused to be shown. Oh! could I tell you the load, the intolerable load, with which this thought presses down my soul; I think it would be a warning to you all to seek the Lord while he may be found; to call upon him while he is near."

## CHAPTER VIII.

SEPHORA was much touched with his anguish, and felt the most earnest desire to bring comfort to his troubled mind.

"I wish," said she, "that I could explain the way of salvation to you as well as my dear father would have done, but I feel that I know it better than I can tell it. I think I never wished for the tongue of the learned so much as I do at this moment. And yet I am convinced it is not the wisdom of this world that gives us understanding in the things of God. He reveals them to us by his Spirit, and he often blesses the meanest instrument, which makes me hope that he will bless even me, and that he will make you hear the glad tidings of salvation from my lips. He always teaches the knowledge of his way to all who desire to learn it. It is himself who implants that desire in our minds, it is himself who alarms our con-

science with the conviction of sin. But, as in the famous pool of Bethesda, the angel of the Lord troubles the waters before the sick are healed, so he only alarms our souls in order to give them true peace, he only shows us the vanity of our own righteousness, to make us feel the need of something better, and teach us to look to the great, promised atonement, as our forefathers did to the brazen serpent, for that alone can heal the deadly wounds of sin, and bring saving health to our souls. I know I explain these things very awkwardly to you, but when you do not understand me, lift up your heart to God, and ask him, that if what I say is truth, and according to his revealed will, that he would make you comprehend it, and feel the comfort of it. And you must remember that this is not a subject of curious speculation, but one which concerns our everlasting happiness."

"Ah!" said Nicanor, "it is not to a man on his death-bed that you need observe that."

"I will begin," said Sephora, "by tell-

ing you how we became exposed to the anger of God, though you probably know something on that subject.

"Adam and Eve were created innocent, with every thing to enjoy, and only one prohibition to prove their love and obedience, and this they disregarded; they eat the forbidden fruit, and by this transgression, brought death, and the forfeiture of eternal happiness upon themselves and us."

"It seems a very heavy punishment for a very small fault," said the old man.

"The fault," replied Sephora, "was their disobedience to God—their contempt of the only injunction given them by that Almighty Creator, who had bestowed all things richly on them. This surely can never be called a small fault. If the test of their obedience was a very trifling thing, we ought to look on this as a proof of the mercy of God rather than as a mark of his severity; for if he had prohibited something essential to their happiness or comfort, they would have been more excusable in disobeying him."

"Well," said Nicanor, "there does ap-

pear some reason in what you say; but allowing that Adam and Eve deserved their punishment, surely it is a hard thing that we should suffer for their fault."

"We shall none of us suffer for their fault; if we do suffer, it will be for our own sins and not for theirs. Or to speak more properly, it will not be even for our sins that we shall suffer, but for not looking to that remedy which is appointed to pardon and to heal them. It is true, we inherit from our first progenitors a sinful nature, and a mind at enmity with God; but to be born in the image of our parents is not a hardship peculiar to the human species. Animals of every sort inherit from their kind, their internal disposition as well as their outward form. If we now saw a lamb and a young wolf before us, we should as confidently pronounce on their nature as on their name. We should not think it any hardship that the wolf possessed from its parents a savage nature, we should not cry out on the injustice of God for not making it gentle like the lamb. And why should we be surprised or discontented that

the children of Adam should be like himself? The astonishment would be if they differed from him, as that would contradict the general law of nature."

The old man sighed.

"This would indeed be a dismal fact," said Sephora, "if there were no remedy. But God has offered to restore his image in us, to give us a new heart and a new spirit. But for these things I will be inquired of, saith the Lord. If, then, we wish for a heart that will love him, and a spirit that will delight in the ways of holiness, we must pray to him to give it us, and he will not deny our request. You know he has appointed us sacrifices to atone for our sins, and he has commanded us to lay them on the head of innocent animals, who carry them far away into the wilderness, where they are remembered no more. Now it is not possible that these creatures themselves can bear away our sins, they are merely types of some great mercy which God has not yet fully revealed to us; some mighty Saviour, who, as the prophet tells us, "will

make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.

" We must believe that this promised Saviour will assuredly come upon earth, and that our sins are forgiven solely on his account, and that it is only through his merits that we shall enter heaven. We must believe this merely because God has said it, and we must be satisfied without any other evidence. This is faith. It is so simple a thing, and we are so much more willing to trust to our own depraved reason and carnal senses, than we are to the word and promise of an unchangeable God, that we are ready to doubt whether this leprosy of sin can be cured by so simple an act as merely believing, and to say in the proud spirit of Naaman, when desired to bathe in Jordan, ' Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel.' I remember hearing my father say, that he thought unbelief was so deeply rooted in our natures, that he sometimes almost doubted, whether, after the Messiah was actually come, people would not find some pretext for doubting,

or perhaps acknowledge him with their lips while they despised him in their hearts. But faith, like every other good thing is the gift of God. If we desire it, we have only to ask him for it, and we shall find Jehovah-Jireh."

Here Sephora paused, for she thought the old man seemed in mental prayer.

She afterwards repeated to him some of the promises of God. Those cordial drops that are everywhere so profusely scattered through the book of life. She thought that the immediate speech of the Almighty would be more likely to cheer and comfort his weary soul, than any thing she could say, and she simply recited these words of the Omnipotent without offering any comment on them.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee. He remembereth us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever. Who is he that feareth? Let him take hold of my strength (saith the Lord) that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon

his God. He will not cast off for ever, though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me. Behold he comes, his arm shall rule, and his reward is with him! But will God indeed dwell with men? Lo, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, and what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Nicanor was much affected, and could scarcely speak to thank her when she went

away; but he begged her in a tone of gratitude to come again to him on the morrow, which she promised to do, and then took leave of him to go to her mother whom she had left so long. She found her and her companion very busy at their work, and she had the satisfaction of seeing that Pythonissa did not seem displeased with her for having quitted her to attend the old man. She was thinking so much of Nicanor, and of what awful importance it is to a soul hovering on the verge of eternity, to know which way its interminable destiny lies; that it was some time before she remembered to tell her mother of the strange man she had found in their cottage. She mentioned it rather in a laughing way, and described all the particulars of his uncouth figure and ferocious countenance. But her mirth was soon over, for looking towards her mother, she saw her so deadly pale that she was quite frightened, and reproached herself for having represented, and perhaps for having exaggerated the appearance of this terrific being. She begged of her not to be frightened about him, but if

she did not know who it could be, to let one of the men from the cottages go home with them, and look about the house and see that no one was there. Pythonissa did not think this necessary, she said she could not tell who the stranger was, but she dared to say it was some forgotten acquaintance, whom she should have been glad to have seen. She denied that she was at all frightened about him, but she trembled all the time she spoke.

They went on with their work, and she recovered gradually from her symptoms of terror, but it was late before they had bound up their bundle of osiers and prepared to return home. Twilight, the short twilight of the east, was yielding to evening, and the noiseless host of heaven were stealthily appearing one by one, while the dewy earth was also displaying her gems, and the pale lustre of the glow-worm was thickly strewed over the marshy ground. Sephora felt her soul in unison with this peaceful illumination of nature, by which she nightly honours her Almighty Creator. She looked towards

Nicanor's cottage, but the shade of the trees fell so dark upon it, that she could not have discerned the spot where it stood, but for the feeble glimmering of a lamp that shone through the apertune which served for a window. Nor did this vaporous light seem to her unworthy company for the purer ray of heaven and earth, for it was associated in her mind with that conscious peace, that secret joy, which seems so inseparably connected even with the endeavour to comfort others.

## CHAPTER IX.

It was almost dark when they reached their cottage; Zepho was never in the house at that time, as he went home every night to his family. Sephora as she entered it, and went into her mother's room to strike a light, could not help thinking of the figure she had found there in the morning, and the circumstance of her having seen something that looked like his black robe, going into the porch after she had left it, now created more suspicion and alarm in her mind than it had done before. She was however glad to observe that Pythonissa did not betray any particular anxiety or fear, and having kindled some dry boughs of cedar, the bright blaze soon dispelled all her own foolish imaginations, and left her mind at liberty to enjoy those grateful emotions of a thankful heart, which her mother's continued and increasing amendment inspired her with.

She felt so much more comfort and con-

fidence respecting her than she had formerly done, that she had now left off that watchful way of sleeping and starting up, fancying that she heard her call. But this night, when she was in the soundest repose, she was suddenly awakened by hearing, or imagining that she heard the hoarse voice of the stranger, saying, in a low, stern tone, "Remember your promise." She called out, "Who is there?" but no answer was returned. The room was quite still, and in so much darkness that nothing could be seen in it or out of it, but the clear constellation of Orion, which shone through the open lattice. The voice had seemed as if it was close to her ear. She lay listening for some further sound till the morning dawned, but hearing nothing, and seeing then that there was no one in the room, she concluded it was a dream, and not a reality, by which she had been disturbed.

The next day was one on which they usually prepared for the feast of tabernacles, which was soon to be celebrated on that part of the plain of Esdraelon, called the plain of Zaa-

naim. It was a day of great expectation and joy. Sephora and her mother were up with the sun, and soon set forward towards the ford, at the little village of Hircanus, which stood on the banks of the Kishon. But when they got there, the waters were so swollen that they could not pass, and many impatient and joyous groups, as well as themselves, were waiting on the banks of the river to be ferried over in a little boat, which could only take in two at once. But as the very hinge on which the pleasure of the day turned was social gratitude and enjoyment, those who were passed over first waited for the others, and sat down in various parties along the margin of the stream, resting from their rural burdens. All were laden with something, either with the fruits of the earth, or with implements of husbandry or instruments of music. Some were crowned with large flat baskets filled with the products of the season. The burnished orange, the paler lemon, the rough coated almond, the luscious fig, the blooming plum, the clustering grapes, the netted melon, and the

cooling gourd. Others carried wine, parched corn, and baked provisions, while all the men were girded with saws, hatchets, and spades —armed for the sylvan war. Old men and women stooping joyously beneath their lighter burdens, and busy childhood with swelled scrips, and trailing branches, delighted to exert every sinew of their growing strength; even infancy was there crowned with wheaten chaplets, holding garlands of flowers, and adding its artless note to the general chorus of joy. As soon as all who had assembled on the banks of the river had been ferried over, they set forward together along a little rocky glen, that gradually widened and became more fertile, and soon presented a beautiful scene of vineyards rising in ranks one above the other, and clothing the hills to their very summits; while the merry groups who were clustered together in various parts, gathering in the vintage, held up their long baskets overflowing with grapes, and shouting to their companions in the vale, echoed to the sound of their flutes, the song of thanksgiving and joy. Nothing

could exceed the festivity of this scene. But soon they came to a more champaign country, displaying more varied tokens of industry and fruitfulness. Flocks, herds, olive-yards, and corn-fields were so intermingled, that it might indeed be said to laugh and sing.

The loaded wains saluted each other as they passed; and the barking of the shepherd's dog, the bleatings of the sheep, the lowing of the cattle, the herdsman's call, the reaper's cry, made the earth ring again with the noise of labour, gratitude, and plenty. This part opened immediately on the spacious plain where they were to erect their leafy tents. It was bounded on the north by a hanging wood that displayed all the many-coloured tints of autumn. It extended to the west, farther than the eye could trace it, and to the east till it almost reached mount Tabor. Here all the party became as busy as the busiest of those they had passed. Their first care was to chuse a convenient place for depositing their stores. Then knives and hatchets were heard sounding through the wood, and all was order and

activity, each worked for the other; it was one common labour and one common joy. They began by cutting down branches of trees and laying them in heaps. The palm, the myrtle, the olive, the willow, were all piled on each other. This was chiefly the work of the men; they then made them into tents of various shapes, and in this employment both men and women united to exert their labour and their taste.

Some of the tabernacles were enclosed, others were made open at the sides by stakes driven into the ground at equal distances, and wound round with the ivy, the eglantine, the gourd, the sweet-scented clematis, and various other plants, whose flexile branches made them willing to lend their ornament to adorn the barren stems. The tops of these pavilions were roofed with leafy branches so thick one on the other, that the light could not penetrate them, and many a silent proof of affection was given in these floral wreaths with which they entwined each others dwellings, and the fragrant shady boughs that

e chosen to protect the most beloved,
n the rays and dews of heaven.
'resh parties continued to arrive through-
the day, and their approach was an-
nced to those already assembled, by the
nd of their flutes and flageolets, which
e sometimes for a few minutes most dis-
tly heard, and then lost again in the
ding of the glen through which they
sed: and thus rising and falling at un-
tain intervals, it sounded like the music
the breeze, and struck chords in unison
h many a happy heart. At noon they all
ected together in a recess in the wood,
ose overhanging shadow formed a grateful
om. Here the young women had been
y in laying out parts of their various
es, while the men had been employed in
more laborious exercise of cutting down
trees. And here they now sat down in
erent groups, arranging themselves, as
lination led them, and talked or laughed
ay the sultry hours. Some had no
ught beyond idle mirth, but others recol-

lected wherefore they were met, and what the mercies were that they were preparing to celebrate. Sephora was of the last number, yet she found her mind in some measure dissipated by the surrounding scene.

The chains by which vanity enthralls us are sometimes almost invisible by assuming the colour of the ground on which they lie, sometimes we think them too weak to be worthy of opposition, sometimes we see them so wreathed round with flowers, that we look on them as mere playful bands; but these encompassing cords, so intricately twined round our souls, which we think so impotent while we yield to them, we find to be firmer than adamant when we endeavour to burst them. In vain do we try all carnal weapons to disengage ourselves from our bonds. The spirit of God can alone cut the gordian knot of sin—and why should we be ashamed to acknowledge the great power of God, and to apply to him for relief, when we know that he delights to exert that power in acts of mercy, and that he never did, nor never will deny the meanest or the vilest of his crea-

tures, who asks in sincerity, to be delivered from the bondage of their corruptions.

Perhaps few persons could think more humbly of themselves than Sephora, or, to speak more correctly, she seldom thought of herself at all. Her chief charm to please might be said to consist in a manner unoccupied by self, and a face, whose varied expression formed the exact index of an undisguised, intelligent mind. From the sequestered habits of her life, and the reflective turn of her mind, which had been fostered by her father's conversation and instructions, her temptations to vanity had as yet been so rare, that she was scarcely aware of the natural tendency to that vice that exists in every human breast. But the sort of intoxication excited by the hilarity of the scene in which she was now engaged, and the thoughts and feelings which it awakened in her mind, convinced her of its danger, and habituated as she had been in every time of trial, to take refuge with an Almighty Protector, she now lifted up her heart to him with fervency in mental prayer. She had

often fled to him in the hour of tribulation, had been relieved in terror, comforted in sorrow, and cheered in dejection, but this, perhaps, was the first time she had asked to be delivered from the snares of prosperity. The train of her serious reflections was interrupted by her companions rallying her on her thoughtfulness, and it was soon time for them to resume their pleasant labours. They set busily to work, and quickly formed many a bower in which our first parents would not have disdained to dwell, in their days of innocence and happiness.

## CHAPTER X.

: plains of Zaanaim already began to as-
e a new appearance, from being skirted
ı the rudiments of this rustic town, which
:ed like the rising metropolis of the syl-
deities. Sephora chose her pavilion in
wood itself, where the shrubs already
ıed a verdurous wall, and by fastening
.e of the branches together that almost
, and adding others to fill the spaces be-
en, a substantial roof was quickly made,
almost as speedily adorned with such nu-
ous wreaths and garlands, that it looked
a mound of flowers. She was thankful that
could see these tokens of kindness be-
ved on her by her friends, and feel that
/ excited her gratitude more than her
ity. Her humility was evidently un-
ned, and she bore all her honours so
:kly, that even her companions who were

most disposed to envy, found the baleful passion checked by her unassuming worth.

Most of the young people associated together and left the old in parties by themselves; but Sephora never separated from her mother till towards the close of the evening, when she could not refrain from leaving her for a short time, while she walked towards the other end of their leafy dwellings, to look at the spot where their tabernacles had formerly stood, and where she could recal a succession of happy days from her earliest recollection to the present time. She forbore to chuse this spot again, out of consideration to her mother's feelings, and made it her request that their dwelling for this year should stand in another place. Yet she could not deny herself the mournful luxury of casting a look on this scite of former happiness.

Some of the stakes which had supported the roof of the tabernacle were yet standing, and the remains of withered wreaths clinging round them, presented sad emblems of departed joys. Sephora looked thoughtfully on

these decaying remains of a building that was originally designed to convey the idea that we have here no abiding place of rest, and she felt that the withered fibres of these faded flowers, which the rough bark of the stem round which they were entwined alone sustained in their place, and kept from falling, and mingling again with the dust, formed a striking comment on the nothingness and emptiness of earthly joys.

Many visions of former happiness arose to her view, and passed rapidly, yet solemnly, through her mind, as she contemplated this ruin of a withering bower, this shadow of shade. But amongst all the scenes of social joy, (and she remembered many,) she did not in her most secret thoughts retrace one in which her father's image was not the most prominent in the group.

She had not been long lost in contemplation of the past, before she heard the band of musicians strike their instruments, and knew that it was the signal of departure: she went towards them, and all were soon ready to journey homeward. Their stores they left

behind without any fear of depredators: nothing could be considered more sacred than this public property, which none had been ever known to violate.

The company which had proceeded to their work in the morning with such clamorous joy, had now exhausted their spirits in labour. Weariness had silenced the voice of mirth: the busy groups who had been gathering in the vintage, and gleaning in the olive yards, were retired to rest: the flocks were penned in fold; the shouting of the harvest was over; the tumult of the rustic world had ceased, and the silent calm of evening sat on the hills, while the luxuriant valley, the narrowing vale and rocky glen, through which they successively passed, faintly echoed the slow and solemn airs of the tired minstrels.

The waters of the Kishon had so much subsided during the day, that they were now able to cross them without the assistance of the boat, by means of fragments of rock, some of which formed the natural bed of the river, and others had been placed there at

such distances, that they could step from one to the other.

Most of the party agreed, that if no more rain fell in the night, they would on the morrow cross the river again with their flocks and herds, and leave them with their shepherds in the plain of Zaanaim, to be in readiness for their sojourn there during the feast of the tabernacles, the celebration of which was to commence in three days.

Sephora, as she returned, thought of poor old Nicanor, and her promise of visiting him again. She did not remember when she made this promise what her engagements would be on this day, or how late it would probably be before her return; but, having told him she would come to him, she could not bear the thought of breaking her word, and perhaps adding to the miseries of an afflicted fellow creature, by making him feel the sickness that proceeds from hope deferred.

Her mother had appeared so unusually cheerful all the day, and so much exhilarated by company, that she did not feel any scruple

at asking her leave to keep her promise with the old man; and as some of their associates would escort Pythonissa to her house, and they were now within two furlongs of Nicanor's cottage, Sephora left her party, and turning through a narrow dingle along a path of moss and flowery mountain thyme, she soon found herself before Nicanor's door. An awful sensation seized her mind as she put her hand on the latch: she felt that a soul might have taken its flight to an everlasting habitation since she was last there; and the uncertainty of whether on entering she should see a breathless corpse, insensible as the bier on which it lay; or a feeble being still heaving with anxious life; or a peaceful child of God, reclined upon his sovereign will, and daring to trust him both for time and for eternity.——This awful uncertainty, and the thought of the unspeakable difference there is between those states of being, thrilled through her frame as she still kept her hand on the unlifted latch. But on entering the cottage, every feeling gave way to delight and praise. A lamp that was

suspended from the rafters, threw its light on the old man's countenance, now no longer clouded by doubt and distress, but animated by hope, by triumph, and by grateful joy.

He raised himself on his bed as she approached. "I know your step," said he, "though I never heard it but once. It is the way I have been accustomed to distinguish people since I lost my sight; and can I fail to know the sound of those feet that brought me the glad tidings of salvation? Oh no! the hovering of an Angel's wing could scarcely stir up a more holy rapture in my heart. How shall I tell you what peace, what unutterable peace I have experienced since I saw you. I have felt as if reposed upon the bosom of my God. I am sure of the efficacy of the promised sacrifice, and I feel the value of an atonement for sin, and my own need of it in a way that I never did before. I see a fund of iniquity which I never discovered till now, that has been continually making me rebel against God, and exalt myself above the need of mercy. But, though the sight is hideous of a naked human heart, yet I

can behold it without dismay; because those words of the prophet are continually on my mind; and I hear them as if addressed personally to myself—"thine iniquity is pardoned—thine iniquity is pardoned."—Oh, do those words sound to you as they do to me?—for I seem to hear them with my very soul: and there is a sufficiency in them, which the actual experience of a troubled, and a comforted mind, can alone conceive an idea of."

"Nicanor," said Sephora, "I was your instructor yesterday, but you are mine today: I know I have but a partial conception of the force of the deep truths of God; and I pray to him daily that he would reveal them to me more and more; and I have a firm hope that he will do so. My confidence in his goodness and mercy is increased this evening by seeing what great things he has done for you. It is impossible to witness the strength of faith in a dying servant of our gracious master, without feeling a more earnest desire after those things that belong to our peace, and forming something of a juster estimate of the value of that heavenly

gift which upholds the soul that was sinking in despair, and more than consoles us for the loss of an expiring world."

"The world, what is it?" said Nicanor, "to the soul that is leaving its receding shores? Where are now those meteor joys and cloudy cares, which threatened or allured, and were lost in the mists of vanity? Where is that adhesive power, by which it held every faculty close bound to itself, as the limpet to the rock?—I look back on my past life with confusion; it has been spent in sin, in nothing, or in worse than nothing—in the pursuit of—I know not what. I wonder at the world's infatuating power, I wonder at the gracious mercy of my God; and I bless you as the messenger of his grace, and perhaps the intercessor through whose prayers I have obtained his mercy."

"I have remembered you many times," said Sephora, "in the course of the day; and my thoughts have ascended to call a blessing down. A large mixed company is not favourable to an intercourse with heaven;

but I believe there is no situation that can prevent a soul that is bent on communion with her God from enjoying it; and as we were returning this evening in the hour of closing day, when nature herself seemed meditative and all our spirits were exhausted by labour, and lulled by the soft solemnity of the surrounding scene, my soul fled to a still calmer region, and I felt how willingly I could leave all the things of this world to enter the place of heavenly rest. I thought of you too, Nicanor, and felt rather a confidence of hope that you would see that way of salvation which your soul seemed so anxiously seeking after. Then it came into my mind how clearly we shall in another world perceive, that what appear to be the fortuitous events of this, are all links in the chain of providence; and many of the darkest and most mysterious dispensations, we shall then find, are the rivets that bind us to a happy eternity."

"God works in his own way," said Nicanor; "we cannot tell why his mercy visits

us; it is his pleasure that it should be so, and all the courses of providence are instruments in his hand."

"Perhaps," said Sephora, "we are all more ready to acknowledge that the great events of this life are meant for great ends, than we are to allow that the most trivial circumstances of our conduct and of our being, may have a necessary connection with things of the highest importance; and that they too are overruled by the Almighty. Why, surely, things that we call great and little, are alike trivial in the eye of omnipotence. They are all mere instruments in his hand; and it is not what *they are*, but what they accomplish, that makes them unimportant or significant. David slew the giant with stones from the brook, when he only went as the messenger of a shepherd's present to a captain of the hundred where his brothers served; and I, when I came only to cut osiers by the water courses, was called to slay the Goliah of your self-righteousness, and make you acknowledge the God of Israel to be the Lord that saveth.

"These are not tears of sorrow that drop

on your hand, Nicanor; they spring from wonder and gratitude at thinking that I should be made the instrument of accomplishing such things. Supposing now that it were possible I could give to every human being in the world an exemption from every evil in life, and the uninterrupted possession of a perfectly satisfying happiness for the remainder of their days; is there any one who would not say that it must be a blessed thing to be such a benefactor to the human race? And yet, this is a happiness which could be estimated. The arithmetician could compute the population of the world, and the years of their life; but let him add these together, and double, and treble the period of their lives, and then sum up the aggregate of happiness, what would all this be to a soul in an eternity of joy? When all this is past, eternity is but as if just begun—it is still eternity.—Oh! it is a mighty unfathomable word; we speak of it much, but we know of it but little. I believe we come nearest in our conceptions of the importance of it, when we think of it as what it is not."

"Yes," said Nicanor, "perhaps it may be so, while we are surrounded and occupied by the things of time and sense; but when we come to stand on the utmost verge of life, we feel something of what eternity is, as well as what it is not. I have now at this moment a much stronger idea of it impressed on my own mind, than those which your words convey. Oh! that these my dear children, who are surrounding my dying bed, may but know how to estimate it; that they may but have heard with their heart and their understanding the faithful warnings of an aged parent, who earnestly longs to meet them again in a better world.

"My beloved offspring, I have nursed you all in succession on my feeble knees, and I believe I have known the utmost fondness of a father's heart: but when I have seen you wasting with pining sickness, or racked with convulsive pain, I have never felt any thing like that earnestness of desire for your relief from suffering, that I now do to see you turn from the ways of a sinful world, to the love of an Almighty God: and though I have

often felt your little arms twine round my very heart, and found your lisping tongues fill me with sensations of delight which none but a parent knows, yet, these purest of human joys and affections, fade away before the thought of that transport with which I should embrace your ransomed souls, in the presence of a redeeming and a sanctifying God."

The family were all moved by the affecting energy with which he spoke. The tattered bed shook with the sobbing children who were gathered round it, and the old man, exhausted by the effort of pious affection, sank on his pillow.

Sephora now rose to go; it was so late that she did not dare to leave her mother longer. She took Nicanor's hand to bid him farewell; and felt that when they next met, it would be to part no more. He thanked her for all she had done for him; and added, "I have never seen you, my benefactress; but when we meet in heaven, I think I shall distinguish your voice among the seraphs." He then begged he might place his hand on her head, and give her his blessing.

She immediately unloosed the turban that confined her long dark hair; threw off the wimple she had just cast over it, and knelt down to receive his last words, while he strengthened himself once more to rise from his dying pillow, and stretched forth his sinewy but emaciated arm, that shook almost to convulsions between the contending claims of life and death. His trembling hand rested at length upon her head: he raised his sightless eyes to heaven, while the tears that dropped from them found a well-known channel down his furrowed cheek, and hung like the gem of sincerity and pity in his hoary beard.

A silence of some minutes succeeded; it was not as if he laboured for thought, but for words to give it utterance. His heart overflowed with blessings for her; but it was some time before his faultering tongue could slowly pronounce this benediction:

"May the blessing of him who now stands on the confines of the invisible world, who sees clearly the vanity of all that is passing from him, and the glory of all that is before

him—who waits but the beck of the Almighty to pass over the threshold of eternity—may his blessing descend upon thine head, and flow down to thy children's children.

"Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; but may the Lord make thee that virtuous woman, whose price is far above rubies. May he pour his Spirit upon thy seed, and his blessing on thine offspring, and give thee a name better than of sons or of daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And in that day when he makes up his jewels, mayest thou be found in his crown of glory, and shine with heavenly lustre in his diadem of beauty, as the brightness of the firmament for ever. I know the thoughts that he thinks towards thee; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give thee a desired end. He maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole: though he show thee great and deadly trouble, yet shall he turn again and look upon thee, so that thou shalt forget all thy misery, or remember it as the waters that have passed away.

son of righteousness' shall arise with
ling on his wing, and thine eyes shall
old that blessed and only Potentate, the
g of Kings and Lord of Lords, who only
h immortality, and dwelleth in that light
nortal can approach."

The old man now became silent; his hand
l rested on her head, but its tremblings
ceased. She thought it was the pause
leath, and arose from her knees to look
his countenance; but the last enemy could
st no conquest there. A holy calm sat
his features, and his whole frame seemed
tionless with heavenly joy.

'Can it derogate from the majesty of our
l, to suppose that he sometimes meets
trembling spirit on this side heaven, over-
dowing it with those encompassing beams
nercy in which it is to dwell through all
nity?—May not Nicanor's soul be now
anced by some faint and distant vision
hat glory, into which it is so soon to enter?"

These were Sephora's thoughts, as she
ted at death's inverted power, thus strik-
ly displayed in the beatific being who

was now before her. She had been n
overawed by the tone of prophesy he hac
sumed in the latter part of his blessing;
she waited some time, hoping to hear
speak again, but he still continued in
same quiescent state, and she once r
arose to go.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE night was dark, and the rising wind began to moan in the trees, and sweep in hollow gusts along the plain. The people gave Sephora a lamp that was but ill protected by a broken horn case, but she was able to shelter the flame from the wind by partly shading it with her mantle, till she got more than a quarter of the way towards her home; when a high blast suddenly blew aside the screen and extinguished the light, and for a few moments made her feel herself in such dreary darkness, that she dreaded taking another step lest it should precipitate her down the steep bank of the river. But, though every star was obscured by clouds, she was soon able to distinguish the high arch of the heavens over her head, and was sensible of a more delightful exaltation of

soul and of a more entire reliance on a protecting providence, than she had felt before.

"Is it not thus," thought she, "when we walk in the light of worldly prosperity, which like the lamp, throws a glare around us that prevents us from seeing any thing beyond it, but let it once be extinguished by the blast of adversity, we stand for a moment desolate, and the sublime glories of eternity open to our view."

She now proceeded on her way with more cautious steps, but she soon got accustomed to the obscurity that surrounded her, and began to see indistinctly the objects nearest to the path, and she also perceived at a distance a light that seemed approaching her. She thought at first it might be one of those luminous vapours, that are not unfrequently seen in Palestine, and which arise in marshy ground, and assume a great variety of appearances, and amuse or deceive the unwary traveller. She continued watching the light, and perceiving that it came steadily forward in what, as well as she could judge, was the

path leading from their cottage, she concluded that it might be her mother coming to seek for her, and a glow of gratitude came over her, at the idea of this supposed kindness, while, at the same time, she felt sorry she had alarmed her by staying so late, and been the cause of her coming out at such a dark and cheerless hour. She now quickened her pace, and being more thoroughly acquainted with her road, the nearer she got to their cottage, she went boldly forward, almost running to meet her mother. She was surprised to find at how much greater a distance she was from her than she had supposed, for the darkness of the night had made the light conspicuous at a great distance. She now approached it more nearly, but when within a few yards she suddenly stopped short, at seeing the immense dark figure behind it.

She was instantly convinced that it could not be Pythonissa, nor could she conjecture who or what it might be, for, seen through a misty atmosphere, it had quite a gigantic appearance. She stepped aside under the

broad shade of an ancient plane tree, whose sheltering branches she was well acquainted with, while this colossal figure passed by her.

It approached with slow and measured steps, muttering discordant sounds in a voice which Sephora thought she had heard before, and quickly distinguished to be that of the mysterious stranger, whose appearance had alarmed her so much once before, and whose voice had since terrified her dreaming thoughts. He advanced with his eyes intently fixed on the lamp he held in his hands, which was protected from the weather by a very transparent substance, and that side next to himself looked as if stained with blood, and cast a dark red gleam of light over his ferocious countenance.

Sephora, who forgot the loudness of the elements, fancied that her hurried breathing would betray the place of her concealment, but he passed by so wholly intent on his lamp and his mutterings, that he heard nor saw else.—The rushing of the waters, the howling of the wind, and the fearful breath-

ing of Sephora, seemed alike unnoticed by him.

She rejoiced at having escaped his observation, but no sooner had he got to the extremity of the plane tree, than he turned again and made the circuit of it; but still he took no notice of her. Again he compassed it in a narrower circle, and again she escaped his observation, but felt unable to move from her station. Each time that he passed she hoped that she should see him no more, and that she should soon feel recovered strength enough to proceed to her home. But she was deceived in her expectations; the stranger again made the mystic circle, and this time he came so near the antique trunk against which she leaned, wan and breathless, that the full glare of his lamp fell on her pallid form. He started at the sight of her with the utmost expression of surprise and horror, the lamp fell from his hands, and he fled, adjuring her as his tormenting angel not to pursue him. Poor Sephora never felt more disposed to comply with any request, than she did with the extraordinary demand of

this mysterious stranger, whom she now supposed to be some poor maniac, who was wandering about the country.

The lamp had not been extinguished in its fall, and as soon as her tottering limbs would let her move from the spot where she stood, she went towards it and took it up. It was more curious and beautiful than any thing of the kind she had ever seen. The covering was of crystal in a globular form, one half smeared over with fresh-looking blood, or with some colour that resembled it. The stand was either of gold, or of the finest brass, and appeared to be of exquisite workmanship, though most of the figures represented on it were the most incongruous that could well be imagined. But she did not spend much time in examining it, as she was desirous of getting home as quickly as she could. She took the lamp with her, and had not gone many yards before she saw a still more cheering gleam issuing from their cottage window, to which she gladly drew near, and in a short time had the comfort of finding herself on her own threshold.

Her mother had retired to rest, but had left the door unfastened; she was not, however, gone to sleep, but said that she lay listening for her arrival. She spoke very kindly and comfortably to her daughter, and as she did not ask her any particulars of her walk home, or what made her so late, Sephora forebore to give her any, and thought it best not to furnish her with any matter of cogitation that might disturb her rest.

She quickly took some refreshment herself, and retiring to her own room, set her curious lamp down on the table, and began to examine it more accurately. The idea at this moment first presented itself to her mind, that this lamp was not hers, and that she had no right to bring it away, that it was in fact stealing the property of another. This thought disturbed her very much. She tried to argue it away by the consideration, that what she had done was mere thoughtlessness, for the idea of any thing wrong had never entered her mind till this instant. She put out the lamp and went to rest,

somewhat fortified by this consideration. But conscience, when unused to yield to any base power, is a stout disputant, and she now returned to the attack, and told Sephora, that though it was no crime in her to carry away the lamp, because she did not then suspect it to be evil, yet the moment she perceived that it was so, it became her duty to carry it back to the place from whence she took it, where the stranger would be likely to look for it, and where it was plain she might have taken it without any danger, because, even if she should have encountered this unfortunate being again, which was not very likely, it was evident that she inspired greater terror in him, than he did in her.

It was in vain that these thoughts came into her mind now, for they came too late for redress, and served only to torment her. The light was extinguished, and in utter darkness she felt that it was quite impossible for her to get up and find the lamp, and carry it to the place from whence she took it. At length she came to the resolution of

lying awake till the dawn of day, and then going to replace it under the plane tree.

Her mind was now at ease, and this circumstance, together with her weariness from the fatigues of the day, made her insensibly forget her determination and yield to sleep, and it was much later than her usual time of rising before she awoke. The first thought that came into her mind was the lamp. She started up to look towards the table where she had left it the night before, but it was gone. When, or how, she could not imagine, and she felt so confused with just awaking, and with the hurry of ideas that rushed immediately into her mind, that she doubted for a moment whether it were not all a dream. But her thoughts soon becoming more settled, she clearly recollected all the circumstances of the preceding evening. She directly went into Pythonissa's room, intending to ask her if she had been in her chamber and taken away the lamp, but finding her mother asleep, she perceived that that could not have been the case, and recollecting how much her description of this stranger had alarmed her

before, she forebore to say anything of her loss, as she knew the mention of the lamp must necessarily lead to all the circumstances connected with having had it in her possession. How to account for its disappearance she knew not. Some perplexing thoughts passed through her mind, but this was not an hour to be held long in the chains of mystery. The sun was shining bright on the dewy earth, and the indefatigable bees were thickly clustered round their hives, and buzzing and fluttering over a knot of autumnal flowers that grew before her window, inciting her by their cheerful industry to emulate their example. And soon a little troop of their neighbours came moving towards their cottage with a jocund step, to invite its inmates to go again to the plain of Zaanaim and assist in driving their flocks. Sephora, on receiving this proposal, looked towards her mother, to see how she felt inclined; as for herself, she would rather have stayed at home. But Pythonissa, though she declined going herself, absolutely insisted on her daughter's accompanying her

friends. Sephora begged almost with tears in her eyes, that her mother would either go with them or suffer her to remain with her; but she continued quite firm to her first determination, and spoke in a tone of voice that she had been accustomed from her childhood to obey.

She had scarcely ever submitted to her authority with greater reluctance than she now did to make one in this joyous group to the plain. Insensibly, however, as she passed along, she caught something of the alacrity of the party. The cheerfulness of nature and of rural scenes and rural occupations, has nothing in it oppressive to a wearied spirit, like the tumult of crowds, and the unmeaning amusements of art; but on the contrary, they rather exhilarated her and restored the tone of her languid mind, while the shepherd's pipe, the plaintive bleatings of the flock, and the gentle tinkling of their many sounding bells, struck a concord with the surrounding objects of which she felt the perfect harmony.

When they arrived at the ford, they found the water quite low enough to pass, but the silly, timid sheep could scarcely be driven across it; they had no recollection of the fresh pastures that lay on the other side of the stream, nor remembered how often their kind and provident shepherds had conducted them thither.

Sephora, who was of a contemplative turn of mind, but who knew little of books, excepting the book of nature and the book of God, was in the habit of reflecting and moralizing on incidental occurrences. She thought that in these stubborn sheep she could trace some resemblance to the flock of a more infallible shepherd, who are ready to be guided by him while he leads them through flowery pastures, but turn aside and go backward at the sight of difficulties or dangers, though they know they have again and again been brought through them by their kind protector, who has there refreshed them in fairer meads, where they have cropped the flowers of immortality,

while the still waters of comfort flowed softly by. And yet, when the next trial comes, they shrink from suffering, they forget their God, and refuse the guidance of his unerring hand.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE valley and the glen presented this day even a more animated scene than it had on the one preceding, for in addition to the flocks and herds that were driven through them, a company of people, almost as large as the one the day before, were proceeding to the plain to erect their tabernacles.

Sephora and some of her friends, who found that their exertions could be well spared from the labours of this numerous host, proposed, as soon as their flocks were conducted to their destination, to borrow some of the herdsmen's mules, and make an excursion to explore mount Tabor. The hill was about seven or eight miles from them. Its singular and regular form rising in solitary grandeur in the midst of an extensive and fertile plain, made it a very peculiar object, equally curious as beautiful. As they approached it, it lost something of that exceed-

ing regularity of form, which, at a distance, made it look more like the work of art than nature, if one could for a moment suppose that art ever wrought any thing so magnificent and stupendous. But on a nearer inspection, broken crags and large masses of rock, intermingled with luxuriant shrubs, and towering forest trees, plainly showed the hand of a nobler operator.

The travellers took their mules a part of the way up the hill, over a mossy herbage, that was perfectly enamelled with flowers. The ascent at this part got too steep to ride any further, and an inviting shade of date trees made them determine to spread forth their stores and dine. They were glad to rest and shelter themselves for a time from the burning rays of the sun, which had latterly been particularly fervid. They were unwilling to suppose that any evil was overtaking them, yet they could not help observing that the clouds seemed gathering for a storm. But they were reluctant to return without having accomplished the object for which they came, particularly as if the storm

fell, they had no chance of reaching any better shelter than the date trees, before it overtook them. The party were now divided in opinion as to what they should do; some thought there would be time to visit the top of the hill and return before the tempest came on, and others were for remaining where they were till it was over. They accordingly divided; Sephora was one of the enterprizers: they soon got dispersed in different pairs and groups as they ascended the steep sides of Tabor. She had for her companion, an old friend of her father's, for whom she had a most sincere esteem, and almost veneration. Patrobus used to call him his oracle, and said if he ever felt doubtful or distressed on any subject, he never failed to find relief by opening his mind to Arbalio. This faithful and judicious friend, whose counsels Patrobus so highly respected, and who had seen the world in various forms for considerably more than half a century, was yet so extremely diffident, that it was almost painful to him to bear a part in conversation, excepting when with

his intimate friends, and yet there were few who could forbear to listen when Arbalio spoke. His gentle, distrustful voice created a silence which the noisy declaimer demanded in vain, and it seemed as if all were more inclined to listen from the very circumstance of their attention neither being enforced nor even desired.

This estimable old man felt none of that shyness with Sephora, which was so often distressing to him. There was something in the natural vivacity of youth and the gentle intelligence of a feminine mind, that was particularly congenial to his taste; and besides these attractions, Sephora had the still superior one of being the daughter and the softened image of his departed friend. Arbalio was not a man who talked of friendship, he was one who felt it, and his regard was oftener to be read in his glistening eye, than heard from his faltering tongue. He was scrupulously exact in adapting his language to his feelings, but he sometimes found he had feelings which language could not exactly express, and then he was contented to

suffer or enjoy them in silence, and he well knew what "that joy or sorrow is that a stranger intermeddleth not with." When he heard of the death of Patrobus, he felt as if one of those bands were burst which bound him to the earth, and another friend safely landed on that heavenly shore on which his own mind's eye had long been fixed.

Sephora felt all the freedom of the most unreserved confidence towards one who regarded her with almost a parent's affection. She told him all her anxieties about her mother, and spoke to him of the events of the preceding night. He did not offer any conjecture as to who the mysterious stranger might be, but made many inquiries about her mother, what her habits of life had been since her husband's death, and how her mind had seemed affected. He said he had often heard people lament that she did not possess those amiable dispositions which so eminently distinguished his departed friend, but for his own part it had often struck him that it was a happy thing she did not, for if one who was himself so full of gentle, fond

affections had met with an equal return in the wife of his youth, it might have made him set up his rest here, and not seek for any thing beyond an earthly happiness and a terrestrial paradise.

Sephora was silent, her friend had incautiously touched two strings which vibrated painfully to her feelings. He was sorry to perceive he had said any thing to distress her, and they walked on some way without speaking. The low muttering of distant thunder at length broke the silence, and turned the subject of conversation. They had now nearly climbed the laborious ascent of Mount Tabor, which they had been more than an hour in accomplishing. It terminated in a fine oval plain, about two furlongs in length and one in breadth, that was nearly surrounded by fine majestic trees, between whose aged, knotty trunks, was presented one of the most noble, extended, and varied prospects that can well be conceived. To the west lay the verdant plains of Esdraelon and Galilee, interspersed with villages and towns, and the bold promontory of Carmel,

stretching into the Mediterranean, which glittered with a million of sunbeams, and looked like an extended sheet of silver.

This prospect formed a striking contrast to that on the north-east, which was now overcast by the rolling tempest, and presented a scene of tremendous darkness. Some, however, of the highest of the snow-capped peaks of the distant chain of the Hermon mountains, were visible above the storm, the sun shone on them, and they looked like the pale watch-fires of death. The intermediate scene was quite obscured by clouds which hung with particular darkness over the sea of Tiberias. The lightning darted across this dense vapour with awful swiftness, now it was a cloud of blackness, and now a cloud of fire. The storm advanced rapidly towards Mount Tabor, and it was almost impossible to contemplate the approach of such a visitant without some sensation of dread. Even the most thoughtless were constrained to feel that there is a Power that rules the heavens, and doth what seemeth him good to the children of men. The elements were all

hushed in deceitful silence as the prelude to some mighty convulsion. It was one of those fearful pauses, when nature herself seems alarmed, and the pulse of life to stand still. Soon this treacherous peace was broken by a rushing wind that swept over the aged crown of Tabor, tearing off the branches, and scattering them with wild fury over the flowery plain. The first rage of the hurricane was scarcely over, before it was followed by a tremendous shower of hail, that seemed sent to complete the work of vengeance, and destroy all that the wind had spared. Rain, lightning, thunder, all the artillery of heaven seemed directed against this devoted mount. But the fury was short, almost in proportion to its violence, and the tempest passed on towards the south over the mountains of Gilboa, Samaria, and Engedi, till it reached the Mediterranean, and obscured the glittering ocean.

It was a glorious sight to watch the footsteps of the storm, and see this winding chain of lofty hills alternately obscured, and then again enlightened by the sun's returning

beam, and many of the dripping party thought it a sufficient recompense for having been themselves exposed to its rage; and feeling at once their nearness to danger, and their deliverance from it, made them look with an awakened eye on these manifest tokens of the Almighty. They now turned again towards the north and north-east, and saw every object with unusual clearness and lustre, from the storm's having swept away all the vapour, and left every object glistening with dew. The ridge of the Tyrian mountains glowing with the purple heath that covered them now in its highest bloom. The lake of Tiberias, on which many anchored boats had spread their sails to dry after the storm, and whose romantic banks scattered round with cities and villages, presented a beautiful and elaborate frame, the joint work of art and nature. This lake, though at its nearest point it was almost ten miles off, yet from the height on which they stood, appeared as if stretched beneath their feet, and they could almost look into the streets of some of its surrounding towns, while they could trace

the deep waters of the Jordan for many a winding mile.

The ancient city of Bethulia, seated on a lofty hill, formed another striking object, among many others, almost too numerous for observation, and far exceeding the limits and powers of description. Sephora had brought with her a basket and an implement for getting up roots, that she might bring away some relic of Mount Tabor. But in going up the hill, she had been too much taken up by conversing with her friend, to attend to the pursuits of the herbalist, and since she had arrived at the summit, she had been so engrossed by fearing, and feeling, and watching the storm, and in seeing the numerous, grand, and interesting objects, which presented themselves from this elevated situation, that she had not found time to look for the humble floweret. Her friend, however, who shared her taste and admiration for these lowly children of nature, as well as for her more stupendous works, proposed to assist her in her researches as they descended the hill, and she had soon her basket full of

novelties for the decoration of her garden. Arbalio explained to her their properties and uses, and descanted on their beauty.

I have often been struck with admiration, said he, when accurately examining some mean looking, insignificant plant, and observing the various contrivances for the protection of the bud, the unfolding of the flower, and the perfecting of the seed. All these I see and wonder at, but where are the tubes which convey juices of such various properties to different parts of the plant? Where is the volatile perfume that surrounds the flower, constant as its guardian angel? Not even the most curious eye can detect them. How limited is the knowledge and the observation of man, even in regard to the meanest object of creation. And yet, had he but a power of combining that knowledge, and of viewing it by one glance of the mind, with what glorious ideas would he be filled, of the great Lord of heaven and earth. If now, at the same time that we looked over that extensive prospect from the top of the mount, we could have felt all that the dif-

ferent parts of it have ever made us feel. But the human mind is too limited to entertain even its own imperfect ideas all at once, and we are so far from being able to do this, that a single flower or leaf fills the mental vision and confounds it.

Sephora looked with pleasure on her basket of treasures, and said, "I shall plant them in the same plot of ground where my dear father used to plant his."

Arbalio, who had often accompanied Patrobus in his excursions to and from Jerusalem, remembered how many pleasant hours they had spent together in admiration of nature, and of nature's God. And the mention of his bed of flowers threw him into a fit of musing on the past. Sephora's thoughts were filled with the same object as Arbalio's, though she saw her father in different scenes, and they walked far down the hill, in a silence that they both felt to be far more companionable, than the conversation of the unthinking world. They had taken rather a different course from the one they pursued in ascending, and they soon found

their path terminated by an abrupt precipice, which presented at its feet a scene of so much beauty, that they were glad they had so far missed their way as to enjoy it. It looked immediately down into a narrow valley of mingled rock and wood, at the entrance of which stood the village of Deborah, supposed to take its name from Deborah, the famous judge and deliverer of Israel.

Near this place was the fountain of the Kishon, which was generally but an inconsiderable stream, but was now increased to a rolling flood, by the mountain torrents that foamed over the large gray stones that had been washed down, or laid bare by similar currents, and which distinctly marked out the channels of the fallen tempest, even when not a drop of water trickled over them. This cascade now formed a very beautiful object, and more especially a little lower down, where it made a more abrupt fall, and entered a ravine of the rock, rising again with a sparkling light spray that scattered itself over the surrounding shrubs. They

thought it a pity to have the enjoyment of this lovely scene all to themselves, and supposing they could not be very far from the place where they had left their more timid friends, they were setting out to seek them, that they might at least have the pleasure of this sight, but on looking forward towards the plain, they saw the group already far advanced towards their rustic habitations.

They now began to fear that they should not find their mules, but on descending to the spot where they left them, they met again the party from whom they had separated in their search after plants, and found the poor animals safely secured to the trees, and from their still dripping appearance they judged that those who staid had fared as bad as themselves, without having had any thing to recompense their toil and their alarm. The most enterprizing of the party were however by this time tolerably fatigued, and glad to get on their mules and follow the path of their more cautious companions.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE birds were singing sweetly as they went along, and seemed rejoicing that the storm was past. Sephora and Arbalio spoke of the variety of tuneful sounds which these little choristers display. "There is something," said Arbalio, "in the notes of the birds in spring, which I think have beyond any other music the power of recalling the past. Those peculiar and delightful sounds seem to unite the balmy air on which they are borne, and to open all the cells of memory by a kind of magic force. There is in spring a fragrance that wants a name; it is to the smell what honey is to the taste—the essence of every sweet mingled and compounded; and like the lotus of the ancients, it makes us forget all our cares; or if we should happen to have no cares to forget—if our visions should be gilded by hope and expectation, then this bewitching gale comes over

us with too much force; and we so completely yield ourselves up to an intoxicated imagination, that we almost forget we still tread on earth, subject to pain, vexation, and disappointment. Do you, my young friend, ever feel any thing of that inebriating influence of the vernal season of which I speak?"

Sephora acknowledged that she did, and she could trace the delusive joys of her own imagination, as he was describing the wanderings of his. "But," added she, "besides all the *witcheries* of spring, there are certain natural objects belonging to every season, which call forth in me inexplicable sensations of delight. An uncultivated mountain on an early summer's morning, purple with heath, and wet with dew, and the wild bees flying from flower to flower, or sleeping in the hanging bells, has always conveyed to my mind enthusiastic ideas of peace and liberty, which I can feel and recall, but cannot describe; or, when the high autumnal blast sweeps the bending trees, and returns

with a shower of many-coloured leaves, which are now wheeled in rapid circles, now lightly poised in air, now falling to the earth, then again rising again to fall, it leads to solemn thought. I think of the time when I watched the unfolding of their fragrant buds; of the time when I sheltered under their leafy branches; and I feel as if I were parting from a friend. I feel the instability of nature, the littleness of man, and myself the least; and yet, amidst these humiliating convictions, I find a consciousness of being allied to that power who sways the blast, and makes the forest bend."

"Sephora," said Arbalio, "you have mentioned some of those scenes in nature, which I have often found affect my mind in the same way that you describe them to have done yours. There is something very gratifying in finding a friend whose intellectual pleasures are congenial with our own: how much higher then does our joy arise, when we feel an entire unity of soul as well as of mind, and know that our friendship in this

world will hereafter bear the indestructible stamp of eternity. But, what are your winter delights?"

"They are of more rare occurrence than those I have mentioned," said Sephora; "and perhaps, from that circumstance afford me the more gratification; but my joy then is to walk over the trackless face of nature, amidst fantastic cliffs of snow, while the setting sun sheds rays of gloomy light, as it sinks beneath the heavy clouds that look more like the Alpine boundary of the earth, than as if still suspended in air. To taste this new, this pure, this solemn scene, conscious that a kind providence has exempted me from feeling any of the rigours of a hard season, fills my heart with gratitude and meditative devotion; while my mind teems with ineffectual projects for the relief of those who find no difference in winter, but an increase of cold, of nakedness, and of hunger."—"Ah!" said Arbalio, "perhaps, those are less to be pitied than the wealthy inhabitants of crowded cities, who only distinguish it by an increase of dissipation, a wider de-

parture from nature, and a greater forgetfulness of all those duties which are designed to link man to man."

The conversation of these friends was here interrupted by some of the rest of the party joining them; they were sorry for the intrusion, but were not put out of humour by it; on the contrary, they exerted themselves to please their new companions, and to prevent them from feeling that they were unwelcome. They all of them soon approached the busy host, whom they had left in the morning, and admired the variety of beautiful tabernacles that had been raised while they were away. Their work had suffered no interruption from the storm, for they had nothing of it in this part of the plain but a slight shower of rain, which had refreshed rather than annoyed them. But they had seen it hanging with tremendous blackness over Mount Tabor, which seemed to flash out fire. The children said, "Is not this like Mount Sinai, when God descended on it?"—and what they said, others thought.

Sephora, when she heard how terrible the

storm had been in appearance as well as in reality, was glad her mother had not come with her, as she was sure she had escaped much apprehension.

They were now all soon in motion for their return, excepting the shepherds, who staid to keep watch over their flocks. Arbalio and Sephora here parted, as his habitation lay in a different direction from hers, on the other side of the hanging wood. He told her that when they met at the approaching festival, he must take her to see it; that he thought she would admire its secluded situation. It was some miles from any other dwelling, almost as much embowered in trees as her tabernacle; and a rill which issued from the rocks above, came dashing down into a small lake that stood before it, and made a ceaseless murmur of which he never wearied.

Sephora asked him if he was tired of life, as he chose such seclusion?—He said—"no; that he had often heard people say, that there was nothing in this world worth living for, but he did not himself feel that weariness of existence which such a declaration im-

plied: on the contrary, that he believed there were many things that were worth living for in this world; but that he knew there were things that were worth dying for in another.

"No," continued Arbalio, "I am not one of those who complain of the dull sameness of my being; I have formerly known life in too much change, but my hopes, which used to rove from vanity to vanity, have long been concentrated on the only unfailing good; and, I think that I have learnt more in my solitude of all the windings of the human heart, by deeply studying my own, than I ever did by the conversation of the wisest men, or the works of the most learned. I can say with Solomon, 'Whoso increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow;' and I should have wished not to have known myself, if I had not at the same time learnt to know my God, and felt his love and mercy controlling my wilful heart. Sephora, if we meet again, I think I will give you some of the particulars of my pilgrimage through this world."

"Well," said Sephora, "we are very likely

to meet, for you know the feast is the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! my young friend, when you have lived as long I have, you will learn to speak doubtfully, and to know that nothing is certain in this life, but uncertainty. When you hear my eventful history, and some parts of it that even your father was unacquainted with, you will not wonder that I should feel a conviction of this truth. You will find some calls for your compassion in what I propose to relate to you. An ancient pagan writer tells us, that when the Deity first formed man out of the ground, reflecting at the same time on the calamities the unhappy creature was to endure, wept over his work, and tempered it with tears, that man, whose heart should be so often overcharged with sorrow, might not want a way to give it vent. Perhaps, I may call forth some of these sacred drops from you: but, farewell; the music sounds to depart, I wish we were going the same path: there are not many for whose society I would willingly exchange my own; but you are one of the few."

Sephora and her friend here parted, and took their several ways; each carrying with them so much thought of the other, that it was scarcely like separation, for the intercourse of mind still seemed to vibrate.

## CHAPTER XIV.

When the party arrived at the river, they found it so much flooded by the thunder storm, and the many tributary streams that had been pouring into it, and the current so exceedingly strong, that it was doubtful whether it could be passed even in a boat. Two however, who were good swimmers, ventured over; and as they crossed it in safety the rest followed, and were in time all landed on the opposite bank without any accident, though not without some sense of danger from the violent rush of waters, that battled hard with their little boat, and was near overcoming it more than once. No one liked to move on towards their home till they had seen the whole of the company safe over, and it made them late before they went forward.

Sephora, who was amongst the first who were ferried over, and was tired with the ex-

ercise she had had in the course of the day, went into the boatman's cottage to rest herself. She found his wife sitting with a child laid across her lap, who was crying and moaning with pain; and a little girl, with the tears running plentifully down her cheeks, was standing over it, saying, "My poor Heber! my poor Heber!" The mother looked miserable, but uttered no expression of sorrow, neither did she try to soothe her child.

"What is the matter with him?" said Sephora. The mother looked up, but made no answer. She then repeated the question, and turned towards the girl. The affectionate little creature could scarcely answer for her tears: at last she sobbed out, "He has been through the fire."

"What! did he fall in?"—"Oh no! they put him in; the priest put him in. Poor little Heber smiled when they bound him round with flowers; but I screamed, for I knew what they were going to do. Mother did not cry; she fell down on the ground asleep when she saw them coming, and it was a long time before any one could awaken

her. She did not hear the drums and trumpets, and clanging cymbals, though they were so very loud."

Sephora, who had heard something of the dreadful rites of Moloch and Baal, but who had never imagined that Israel had been polluted with their worship since the time of the captivity, or suspected that any of their deluded votaries lived so near her, trembled with horror at this recital; and the moans of the poor child pierced her heart a thousand times more than they did before. She lifted up the loose covering that was thrown over it, and shuddered to see how dreadfully it was scorched.

"What! can you be the mother of that child?—can you bear to hear its groans, and think that you allowed this misery to be inflicted on it; and even now, can you listen to it, and do nothing to assuage its pains?"

"I must not," said the mother; "Baal likes to hear its cries, so I must endure them. He was angry at my refusing at first to have him pass through the fire, and sent

that great storm; and I dare not offend him again."

"Some wicked creature has been imposing on you," said Sephora, "how should an image made by men's hands be able to raise a storm, how should an idol that has no sense be offended? But if it is that power of darkness, that beguiles one man to make, and another to worship such things whom you fear to offend, why should that thought trouble you? for the more we offend him, the more we please the true God, who made the world and all things in it."

"You may take the child and do what you will with him," said the mother.

Sephora, who never disdained to help a fellow creature, gladly undertook the office of relieving this poor little sufferer. She wetted rags in cooling liquids, and kept applying them to its scorched body, till the pain was so much abated that the child fell asleep.

Nothing could exceed the joy and gratitude of the little girl when she found her

brother grew so much easier from Sephora's care. She kissed her hands with untaught grace, told her that she should never be able to forget her, and said she wished her mother worshipped the same God that she did, the God that liked little children to rejoice before him, and not the one who was pleased with their cries. That, when she saw them crossing the river the day before, and all looking so happy, she was sure no one could be going to be burnt to the God of the plain, as they were to the God of the grove.

"The God that we worship," said Sephora, "is not an image. He is a Spirit everywhere present. He made all things, and knows all things. It is he that created the mother and the child to love each other, and implanted those kind affections in our hearts which it is almost impossible for the most wicked wholly to stifle, but if we resist their influence and refuse to pity those whom we cannot but love, he is justly angry, and we may feel something of the beginnings of his anger in a disturbed mind which can find no peace, nor can we ever find it, till we turn

from sin and vanity to the love of the living God. The feast of tabernacles, for which we have been preparing, is very different from those held in honour of idols. We all live together for eight days under huts made of the branches of trees. The poor and rich all fare alike and are as brothers. This feast was instituted to remind us of the time when our forefathers lived in the wilderness before they came to this beautiful country; and it was also ordained to make us remember, that even this happy land in which we now abide, is but a wilderness, in comparison of that better world to which every moment brings the child of God nearer and nearer. It teaches us to consider ourselves but as pilgrims and strangers upon earth—to look on all men as our brethren—and to be ready to divide our abundance with them. If your mother will let you go with me, I will take you the day after to-morrow to the plains of Zaanaim and explain every thing to you; you will then learn how different a Being the only true God is, from those wicked ones you imagine when you worship idols."

"What!" said the little girl, "do all that multitude of people that crossed the river yesterday and to-day, know the only true God? Why then do they not take pains to tell us of him, and try to make us leave those wicked idols?"

"But how could they know that you were idolaters?"

"If they did not know that we were idolaters, they must know that all the nations round about us are, and why do they not go amongst them and teach them better? I think, if I were sure that there was but one God, who could make people happy, and knew there were a great many who had never heard of him, that I should be for going or sending all over the world to tell of him, and to persuade people to love him, and not to burn any more poor little children."

"Perhaps," said Sephora, "one reason why they do not act as you say you should do, is because the shocking things belonging to your worship never happened to fall under their observation. For though I am afraid

there are a great many amongst that multitude who know little of the true God but his name, and who never think upon his commandments to do them; yet I can scarcely persuade myself that one could be found who would not have shuddered to see that poor devoted child, and hear his piteous moans, and who would not gladly have done what they could to ease his sufferings. But people do not think much of misery when they do not see it. I never thought of the wickedness of idolatry so much before, because I never till now saw the shocking effects of it; nor had I any idea that it could so sear a parent's heart, as to make her behold unmoved the agonies of her infant child."

The poor woman, who had done what she could all the day to stifle a mother's feelings; and who had suffered much more exquisite torments, than those the flames inflicted on her poor babe, now felt relieved from some of that thraldom in which she had long been held by Baal's priests, and she dared to relieve her oppressed heart by sobs and tears.

She took Sephora's hand with that mingled feeling of respect, of affection and of confidence, with which she would have touched the hand of a guardian angel. She tried in vain to speak but could not articulate for many minutes. At last she said, "Take me with you too, and teach me to know your God; for I have done with mine."

Sephora was now in her turn overcome by her feelings, she sat down in silence, and her thoughts fled where it would weary the world to follow them, yet did she find at that moment, what they perhaps have been seeking all their lives in vain, a plenitude of joy that left no room to wish for a happiness beyond that she experienced.

Perhaps many will listen with incredulity to this fact, but let them remember that happiness must be somewhere, or there never would be that universal desire implanted in us to seek after it, and those who have all their lives been pursuing without having ever yet attained, would do well to leave their old paths, and seek that more excellent way of true religion, where thousands and thousands

of rejoicing souls can attest, that she is to be found in such transcendant brightness, that she beams through all the sorrows of this life; through poverty, through sickness, through contempt, through reproach. These things may for a time obscure, but they can never extinguish, that happiness, which the love of God sheds in the heart of man. The sun may be dimmed by the storm, but it still remains perfect in itself, and spends the brightness of its golden beams on those very clouds which look so dismal to those who only see them on their gloomy side. So the sorrows of the child of God, though outwardly they look so dark and cheerless, are inwardly illumined by the hope of glory.

## CHAPTER XV.

SEPHORA did not stay much longer at the boatman's cottage, before she was called away by her companions, who had all been brought safely across the river, and were now ready to proceed to their different destinations, some to the right hand, and others to the left. But, however various their course might be, one sentiment of gratitude very generally pervaded their mind, for their deliverance from the peril to which they had so recently been exposed. But with most it was a very transient feeling, only born to die.

When Sephora reached her home, she found her mother sitting up for her, and to the full as cheerful as usual, yet she thought there was something of constraint in her manner, and feared that she had in some way given her offence, perhaps by not immediately obeying her in the morning, when she signified her

desire that she should go to the plain wi
those companions who called for her. F
Pythonissa always liked to be implicit
obeyed, and wanted that nicety of men
perception which makes the movements
one mind intelligible to another. She the
fore only saw that her daughter was unw
ing to do as she desired, without perceiv
what it was that occasioned her reluctanc

They had not long remained together
fore Pythonissa told Sephora that she lool
very tired, and advised retiring to th
rooms, which counsel the latter was will
enough to take, for she was in truth qu
weary with her exertions and ready for re

She could not tell how long she had be
in that profound kind of sleep which is
wages of healthful toil, when she was rou
by the same dismal sound by which she h
been alarmed once before. She started
with sudden fear, and found her way in
dark to her mother's door, almost before
could recollect herself or knew what her
tentions were. Here she was seized w
fresh alarm, for she now distinctly percei

that these sounds came from Pythonissa's room.

An habitual dread of offending her, made her hesitate in this fearful moment as she laid her trembling hand on the latch of the door, and gently raised it. What was her horror and astonishment at this moment, to see her poor mother with dishevelled hair, tearing and scattering it as she did at her father's funeral, and walking round and round uttering all those inhuman sounds which now horrified her more than ever.

She knew not what to do, she saw that her mother's senses were gone, and in the resemblance she traced in these obsequies to those of her father's funeral, she no longer doubted in the least the cause of her distraction. She feared going into the room to her lest it should irritate her more, for she was aware that she had no strength that could resist hers, should she become violent; she therefore determined on watching her to see that she did herself no harm till she could get some assistance.

Pythonissa continued exactly the same

movements for a considerable time, she then advanced to the table, and directed Sephora's eyes towards it, for she had before been so intent on watching her mother, that she had seen nothing else. A lamp stood upon it which shed the full blaze of its light on a basin of blood, and a book marked with curious characters and figures was spread open before it.

Pythonissa examined these figures with great attention, then dipped her finger in the blood, and traced something like them on the floor till she had formed them into a circle, studying the book between every figure she drew, till the whole was complete; after which she again uttered the same shocking sounds she had done before, tearing and scattering her hair, and appearing to suffer the utmost extremity of frantic horror which nature was capable of enduring. After this she became more calm, she swept up her torn hair, and carefully washed out the bloody characters, hid the book in an old chest, and taking up the basin in one hand and the lamp in the other, walked

towards the door. Sephora had scarcely time to step aside before she passed her, and cautiously unclosing the outer door, walked forward towards the river. She tried to follow her and to cry after her, but she found it in vain; she knew not what became either of herself or her mother, but her worst fears were without foundation, for on opening her eyes again, the first object she saw was Pythonissa entering the door with only the lamp in her hand. Sephora retreated to her own room, and after some time, finding by her mother's manner of breathing that she was asleep, she approached softly towards her to see how she looked. Her appearance was not altered, but her rest seemed merely, and indeed scarcely, a bodily rest. It was plain to see that her mind was still disturbed by those same ideas that distracted her when she was awake; at one time her finger moved gently as if she was tracing some figure, then she rubbed it violently over in the most hurried manner, as if to efface what she had written. This last idea was the one that seemed to predominate in her disturbed imagination.

Her hand moved so incessantly that it looked at length almost like a convulsive motion.

Poor Sephora, as she watched this melancholy sight, doubted how she should act, or what she should do. Many thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, but none that gave her any hope of comfort; till at length it occurred to her that she would go and consult the physician, her father's friend, at Mount Carmel.

As soon as she had come to this determination, she set about accomplishing it. She thought there could not be a more favourable moment for leaving her mother than while she was in this profound sleep, and she hoped before there was a probability of her awakening that she should be able to send Zepho and one of his daughters to her, to watch over her and take care of her till her return from Mount Carmel.

She accordingly prepared herself and Emmor for departure, and calling on their faithful old servant, told him something of her fears and where she was going, and conjured him to lose no time in hastening to

their house, and to enter it very softly that her poor mother might not be disturbed; and when she awoke, not to say where Sephora was gone if he could avoid it, lest it should make her more violent.

Poor Zepho, who was as much interested for his master's family as if it had been his own, was much shocked at this account, and promised to do all he could in taking care of his mistress till Sephora's return. His daughter, too, engaged to follow her father as soon as she had done what was necessary for her own family.

Zepho lost no time in getting ready, and his attention was so wholly taken up in pondering on this heavy calamity, that he even forgot his sheep till he was far advanced towards the house, when, seeing a shepherd crossing his path with his flock, the remembrance of his own, who were fast penned in their fold, occurred to him, and he stood irresolute which way to move. The interest of his sheep was habitually nearest his heart, and the more he thought of the poor creatures bleating for their pasture, the higher his

compassion rose, till at length the distracted Pythonissa scarcely found a place in his thoughts, and he turned his feeble steps back towards the straggling row of huts where he lived, to send some one to shepherd the flock.

This was the day that Zepho had proposed to drive them to the plain. The old man to whom he applied to take charge of them, who was almost his cotemporary in age, reminded him of this circumstance, and then leaning on their staffs, they fell into chat of who had taken their flocks, and who had not, and who proposed to go this day, and who the next, till Zepho's mind became so full of his neighbour's concerns, that he quite forgot his own, and Sephora's charge never occurred to him till his companion asked him, what was the reason that he could not take his sheep to the plain to-day? Then his poor mistress, and his promise, and his lost time, came all to his recollection, and he walked off almost without answering.

## CHAPTER XVI.

SEPHORA all this time was diligently pursuing her course towards Mount Carmel. She passed by the rock cottage, which had been undecorated and untouched since Patrobus died, and in that luxuriant country, where the growth of vegetation is so rapid, it looked as if it was fast returning to the state they had originally found it in.

It was not an object to cheer her, nor yet was the stony valley, in which her father closed his eyes, nor the rock crowned with the dark turrets of the castle, whose deserted courts were the last they traversed together when they proved but the prelude to the more silent ones of death.

The road to Carmel lay through this valley, and wound round the foot of the rock. It was one of those oppressive days when not a leaf moves, and she felt that the heavy calm that sat on all nature added another

weight to press down her desponding heart. She wished she could feel the relief of those tears which, according to the pagan fable, tempered the human clay. But they gave no vent to her griefs. Her distress seemed too great and too complicated for such an alleviation. The death of her father—the distraction of her mother—her own loneliness—travelling a road she had never been before—presenting herself to a person she had never seen. All these things came at once in their fullest force upon her mind.

A pagan knew the solace of tears, but Sephora sought a more infallible soother of the human heart, and soon she could say with the royal bard: "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts refreshed my soul." A lark at that moment springing up beneath her feet, and towering to heaven with its song, made her feel how wrong it was in her to despond, while inferior creatures rejoiced before their maker, and were sustained from day to day by his unfailing bounty.

The road from the point of ascent to the

castle was quite new to Sephora, it wound round the rock, and immediately entered on mountain scenery, which became bolder and bolder till it terminated in the abrupt headland of Mount Carmel, which stretched forward into the Mediterranean. The breeze grew fresher as she approached the sea, and felt reviving to her spirits, and on turning an angle of the road she saw children burning fern; the light curling vapour rising in the air, and the merry little faces who were standing round it, looked cheering after passing many miles without meeting a human being. They had been entrapping sparrows on the mountains, which they were going to sell at the city of Hepha. The chorus of song, speech, and laughter was amongst them, and resounded from the rock, and at their unsorrowing age, when mirth is nature, and nature mirth, it exhilarated her even more than the ocean's breeze. She caught something of the contagion of happiness from all around her, "the insect youth were on the wing," myriads and myriads of animated beings met her ear, her eye, and by their tran-

sports told her she served a God whose mercies were over all his works. This young group, however, could not give her any information of Vashni's dwelling, and she was obliged still to go on in uncertainty. She looked round to see where she would be likely to get intelligence, and observed a high ground to the left, which appeared to be a threshing-floor, for many asses laden with sheaves were standing near it, and a man was busily employed in taking off their burden and spreading it on the top of the hill, while another was leading oxen towards the place, as if to tread out the corn. She advanced to the spot, but before she could reach it, the man had yoked the oxen to a wain, and was driving them swiftly round and round. The saws and spikes on the wheels and rollers of the wain made so much noise that she could not make the person who was driving it understand her inquiries, and she went forward to the other, who, with the asses that carried the sheaves, was now reposing at some distance under the shade of umbrageous chesnut trees. He was so intent on looking over a

basket of herbs, and culling the different sorts, that he did not perceive her approach till she spoke, when he raised his grey head, and, with a countenance full of benevolence, told her he was the person whose house she inquired for, and asked her what ailed her. She mentioned her name and her grief—he received her like a father, and consoled her by declaring, that he did not consider her mother's mind deranged, and that he had great hopes she might soon be restored to health, if she were under his care.

Vashni immediately understood by Sephora's description, that her mother had been practising magic arts, and as he before knew that many years ago some of the priests of Baal had issued forth from Tyre, and had succeeded in establishing the worship of their idol in some of the adjacent parts of Galilee, and that Pythonissa had more than once attended their impious feasts, he did not doubt but that the gloominess of spirit which had fallen on her since her husband's death, was in conseqnence of her having again returned to her idolatrous practices.

He did not mention his conjectures, for he could not bear to dash the happiness he had just raised, and perhaps give a more poignant sorrow than the one he had taken away. He therefore strove to amuse her as they walked towards his house, and soon the ease and cheerfulness of his manner, and that nice discernment of the feelings of others, which qualified him in an eminent measure for a physician of the mind, enabled him to restore to her the natural tone of her spirits. When he had succeeded in comforting her, and in persuading her to take some refreshment, which was very needful after all the fatigue she had undergone, he advised her to repose till the sun began to decline, and he would in the mean time prepare things for their departure, and the reception of her and her mother under his roof. He then left her to silence and meditation, her heathy couch, and the music of the ebbing waves.

This last luxury, which was perfectly new to her, was in exact unison with her feelings, the solemn monotony of the dashing waters on the shore, and the sweep over their pebbly

bed on their reflux to the deep—the thought that this always had been, and always would be, till the world should be no more—that the warning ocean still continued thus awfully to count the time to nature, while successive generations of thoughtless mortals passed rapidly away;—these and other solemn musings stole through her mind, and though she could not sleep, the stillness of all the passions was as soothing, and almost as reviving to her spirits as the forgetfulness of repose could have been. She saw by the shadows that the sun was beginning to go down, and heard with pleasure Vashni's approaching step to summon her to depart.

He led her a short way from the house to a chariot he had prepared to fetch her mother in, and seating her in it they drove off. The route they were forced to take, in order to find a way wide enough for the vehicle they travelled in, was much more circuitous than the one she had taken in the morning. They wound round the foot of Mount Carmel, and entered a narrow defile among rocks, whose prodigious height made them look up

with fear and awe, while every turn presented them with some new object to keep alive surprise, and the scenery being all of one bold character, it gave at once the charm of change and of continuance. The goats and antelopes, the free-born denizens of these wilds, gazed on the chariot as it moved slowly through their craggy pass, with a look of inquiry rather than of fear, as if they would loftily have demanded who it was that was intruding on their solitary realm. The range of the rugged mountain was their pasture, and they either felt too secure in these inaccessible heights to dread the approach of man, or too unacquainted with his wiles to shun his presence. The rocks, though bare of earth, were not destitute of vegetation, there were many clefts and fissures in them, out of which grew plants of a dark and glossy green.

"I always," said "Vashni, feel a particular kind of admiration as I look on trees growing as those do out of the arid rock, and cheering the desert with their smiles; they are like those contented sons of poverty and labour,

hat derive their support and comfort from ome hidden source, and seem exempt from eeling the dejecting vicissitudes of life."

As Sephora approached towards home, and ecognised scenes that were familiar to her, her ıother again occupied all her mind. Those addened thoughts with which she had left ıese objects in the morning, seemed still to ang over them as if waiting her return, that hey might again take possession of her soul. ıs they were now getting near to her ha-itation, she proposed they should get out nd walk, for she thought the appearance of he chariot would alarm her mother. They ıad not gone far, when they came in front ›f the house, and saw Pythonissa leaning ›ut of one of the lattices, looking rather wildly first one way and then another, but ıo sooner did she recognise her daughter's ıpproach, than her eyes were intently fixed ›n her, and she impatiently held out her ırms as if she longed to hold her in them.

Sephora feared that all this was derange-ment, yet she was moved with something like a sensation of joy at this unusal token of

affection, even though it were but the effect of insanity, and eagerly ran forwards to meet her. Vashni scarcely knew what to think of all he saw, when he compared it with what he had heard of Pythonissa's usual apathy. He hastened on, and when he entered the room, found her with her daughter on her bosom, but heard nothing but convulsive sobs; it was some time before she could in any other way express her feelings. Poor Sephora, during this interval suspended between hope and fear, knew not what to think. At length Pythonissa exclaimed, "My child, my child, I have never known the blessing of you before, I have never till this day known the kindness of a mother's heart—a mother do I say—do not I owe you filial as well as parental affection, since you have rescued me from the pit of destruction, and given me my better life? O Sephora! how shall I tell you of all my wickedness since your poor father's death? It was not grief for him that affected my mind with that gloom which hung over it, it was having communication with the idolatrous worship-

pers of Baal, from which I had been restrained during his life by my love towards him—it was a something of conflict that yet remained in my bosom, before I could entirely resolve to give myself up to the whole mystery of iniquity, that rent my heart, and made me the prey of misery. My reason was shook and almost overthrown, and my temper, which was never good, as you must too painfully have experienced, was a thousand times worse than ever. I cannot think of my anger and peevishness towards you without abhorring myself, and I can only wonder how it was that I should be blessed with such a child. I will not shock you by describing scenes of wickedness that would make you shudder; but yet for the ease of my own conscience, and out of the fulness of my heart, that now enlarges towards you in a way it never did before, I must tell you of some of my iniquities, and how I have been going on since Patrobus died.

"Whenever you went out, I constantly either attended some meeting of idolaters, or had their priests here to visit me, and when

you left off tending the flock, and took upon yourself the entire management of all our household cares, it only gave me more leisure to brood over and practise those arts of magic they had taught me. The subject sank deeper into my mind, and produced that gloominess of spirit which must have caused so much misery to you as well as to myself, and yet so infatuated was I, that I scarcely wished to be delivered from it. At least I could not resolve to renounce the sin that caused it, and till that day when you may remember you urged me to pray, I never felt any thing like a real sorrow for the lengths I had gone in wickedness, or formed any purpose of leaving my evil ways; on the contrary, the whole bent of my thoughts was how to pursue them with the greatest secrecy; but the earnestness and affection with which you then spoke to me, made me wish to think and act as you did, and I resolved that I would try and do so, but these faint purposes were made one moment and broken the next, and it was not till the morning when we went to gather olives, as you were

reciting in the valley the power and mercy of God, that I felt my heart really touched. At first I only wished to feel what you were saying, but could not: I heard the echo reply, and thought my heart was harder than the flinty rock, for no responsive voice was there. But scarcely had I thought this, ere my heart seemed to melt within me, my tears flowed, and such tears till then I think I had never shed. Yet I did not dare to address myself to the true God, till I had formally renounced the false ones.

"There was to be a great feast in honour of Baal in three days, which I had promised to attend; when it was expected by the priests, and indeed I had almost determined in my own mind, that I would entirely give myself up to their abominable delusions, and utterly forswear the God of my fathers. I now resolved to attend this meeting, not for this infamous purpose, but to renounce all such assemblies of iniquity for ever. Alas! I did not then know how frail I was; I did not then know how inefficient a resolution formed in my own strength, was to accom-

plish its purpose; nor how dangerous it is to run into temptation with the hope of vanquishing it.

"As the hour approached, I sometimes found my heart veering between good and evil. I often felt a restless desire to know the whole mystery of magic, which would sometimes appear to me as a most bewitching sin; so that I scarcely knew how to lay it aside, and to have done prying into futurity. And yet, I think I may say, that the full purpose of my heart, when I went to the feast yesterday, was to abjure all idols for ever. But I was not then so far humbled as to intend ever to confess to you that I had had any thing to do with them; I think I could as soon have died as declared my iniquity. Now, on the contrary, it seems a relief to my mind to acknowledge my vileness, and abase myself before you.

"You were scarcely gone yesterday with your friends to drive their flocks to the plain, before I set off to Baal's feast. I had far to go; some of the priests came to meet me, and particularly one who had most influence

over me, advanced almost to the boundary of our land mark. He had been here the night before, and I was alarmed at finding his magic lamp on your table. He had promised to bring it to me after he had performed his own incantations; and I supposed had inadvertently left it there.

"I thought myself fortunate in going into your room, while you were asleep, and in bringing it away before you could have seen it; and yet this narrow escape from discovery occasioned me so much perturbation, that when I heard you coming into the room half an hour afterwards, I feigned sleep to hide the cowardice and commotion of guilt. I took this precious instrument with me, and restored it to its owner, feeling some triumph over myself that I had not attempted to try its virtues, or find out its hidden power. He welcomed it as a most miraculous boon, and assured me it had been taken from him the night before by an angel, who had suddenly appeared to him as he was invoking a spirit of another order; but the demon who inhabited the lamp was stronger

than the being who had wrested it from him, and that when the flame was expired, which had been lit by mortal hands, the angel had no power to retain it, but was constrained to return it, by putting it into the hands of one of the faithful worshippers of Baal, who though she had been partly seduced from her stedfastness by the sophistry of an artful daughter, he doubted not, and he would dare positively to prophesy, would this day become acquainted with all those mysteries for which her mind had been so long preparing; and that from henceforth she would be teased and distracted no more by doubts and fears, but all uncertainties being removed from her mind, futurity would become unveiled before her.

"As he delivered the latter part of this speech his voice altered, his eyes rolled, and his whole body became convulsed as if he was impelled to utter these words. Whether that were really the case, or whether he only counterfeited the voice and gesture of demoniac inspiration, I know not.

"Many more priests now came forward to

meet me; they knew where my weakness lay, and what temptations would be most likely to prevail; and did all they could to flatter my pride and provoke my curiosity; and when they saw that I was endeavouring to resist these snares, they tried to work upon my terror, and took me into a dark cavern, where they presented several horrid sights to me; strange apparitions with heavy countenances stood before me, and I heard the peeping, muttering wizards of the deep.

"A violent tempest of thunder, whirlwind and hail came on, which reverberated with tremendous sound through the hollow rock, while the lightning descended through the fissures of the den, and filled it with the alternate blaze and darkness of the angry heavens. Wild shrieks at intervals were heard above the storm, and they persuaded me that it was the vengeance of the indignant gods that was going to fall on my devoted head, unless I instantly consecrated myself to them.

"I was so wrought on by my fears, and by the delusions and wickedness of my own

mind, which still secretly inclined towards idolatry, that I promised all they required, and had a curious book of magic given me with instructions how to use it; but I was not to attempt it till the second watch of the night. I felt a restless desire for this time to come; every moment seemed an hour till the prescribed time of practising my incantations. At length it arrived, and I unrolled my curious book, and went through all the mystic evolutions of iniquity, which I had been instructed to do, till my senses seemed almost gone, and I felt more like a fury than a woman. I then carefully obliterated all the magic characters, and put away every trace which could lead to discovery; for the greatest horrors were to be my portion if any of the uninitiated found out what had been done.

"This idea of the importance of concealment, seemed to be almost the only one that was left me; and it continued to harass me in the most dreadful manner, after I had fallen asleep. Sometimes I fancied that I heard you coming, and the harder I rubbed

the characters in the magic circle, the brighter they appeared, till at last they became a scorching flame that consumed my soul. Then the remembrance of my good resolutions came to torment me; you and Patrobus appeared to me far off in happiness, while I was still in the cavern that was now filled with horrible and eternal night. I heard a rebounding echo from the hollow mountains, and the rushing sound of beasts that could not be seen. There appeared a fire kindled of itself, very dreadful; and the things that I saw not, appeared worse than those I saw: yet was I to myself darker than the darkness, and more scorching than the sulphureous flame. But I will not attempt to describe the terrors of my mind; I can only wonder that I survived them. At length, after what appeared to me ages of torment, I awoke; and, oh! what gratitude flowed into my mind, to find it was a dream; I felt as one raised from the pit of destruction by the mercy of the Almighty.

"All those religious truths, all those promises of God delivered by the mouths of the

prophets, which Patrobus for more than twenty years had been endeavouring to impress upon my mind, and which used to seem more wearisome and unmeaning to me than the babbling of the brook, now came with force to my heart. They had lain on my memory like the dry bones strewed through the open valley in the vision of Ezekiel; but now the spirit of the Lord breathed upon them, they came together clothed with life and glory. At first, they shed celestial comfort on my soul; then I was tempted for many hours to despair, and to say, "these things are not for me, the heavens were for an instant opened to me, only that I might see what I am excluded from, and the blackness of darkness is reserved for me for ever:" but, blessed be God, he dispelled this murky gloom, this death of seven-fold horrors.

"I fell down before him, intreating him to make me what I ought to be; and never again to leave me to myself, and to the delusions or the misgivings of my own wicked heart. Groans, and words, and tears, and sighs, mingled together, and made a language

that could only be intelligible to that Being, who reads the heart. Poor Zepho, I believe, did not know how to understand it, for when I became composed enough to perceive that he was sitting by me, I found his looks full of terror and pity. He has never left me all the day, nor would he suffer me to go in search of you, whom I supposed to be somewhere with the flock on the plain, but kept watching over me with such incessant and anxious attention, that at last I began to suspect you must in some way have been alarmed by me in the night, and thought that you were perhaps gone somewhere for help for me. Ah, my dear child! you had already been to the only unfailing fountain of health and strength, and I feel that the healing waters of life that now overflow my soul, have been drawn down upon it by your prayers."

Pythonissa held her daughter to her heart as she said this; and Sephora was too full of gratitude to heaven to reply.

## CHAPTER XVII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the happy change that had taken place in Pythonissa, and which seemed to make her removal from home unnecessary, Vashni would not allow his friends to give up the purposed visit to him. He told Sephora that he was sure by her mother's appearance, as well as by her description of what her mind had gone through, that her health must have suffered in the conflict, and that it would be advisable, though not absolutely necessary, that she should be under his care. He begged therefore that they would be prepared to accompany him very early in the morning, as he wished to be ready to attend the solemn procession as it marched with dance and song towards the place where the feast was to be celebrated. They promised he should not have to wait for them, for they would have been equally sorry as himself to miss this opportunity of rejoicing

before their Creator, and acknowledging the mercies which he had showered down on them from generation to generation.

Pythonissa who had hitherto made one in those processions, and mechanically followed the steps and voice of the multitude, without having one sensation of gratitude excited in her mind, now felt her heart overflow with the mere idea that she should so soon have an opportunity of publicly testifying her thankfulness, for being delivered from more perilous wanderings, than those her forefathers had known in their passage through the deserts; and the mercy of God struck her as very great, in allowing a sacrifice for sin as a token of peace; and as a type and assurance of the promised Saviour. She bid Zepho select the most spotless lamb of the flock, and give him on the morrow to the Levites, on the plains of Zaanaim, to be offered up for her as a sacrifice for sin: and as she gave this charge, she wept at the thought that the innocent must bleed for the guilty. Vashni talked with her for some time on the nature of sacrifices. He said they had al-

ways appeared to him as one of the deepest mysteries of religion—as the part of it that was most contrary to natural reason and justice, and at the same time, (and in part from that very cause,) as the most irrefragable proof that they must have had their foundation in the Almighty mind.

"I have been a great traveller," added Vashni, "I have visited many nations, and inquired into the customs of many more; and I have universally found that however defective and impure their religion may be, whether they adore the insect that crawls the earth, or the host of heaven that enlightens it, whether they fall down before the image of their departed heroes, or are crushed beneath the ponderous weight of the rolling tower, in which they suppose the evil spirit to reside; however various their ideas may be on these subjects, there is one that they all concur in, which is the offering of sacrifices. In this the most polished and the most barbarous nations are all of one mind; the Grecians who have brought arts and literature to those bounds beyond which it cannot

pass, and the savage roamer over the uncultivated earth who knows no more of intellectual things than the beast that he pursues.

"Now, how shall we account for this universal propensity to appease the gods by sacrifice?

"Nothing, as I said before, can be more contrary to natural reason and justice, than to suppose that the sufferings of an innocent animal, should take away the guilt of another no way connected with it. The faintest glimmerings of sense, and the full blaze of human knowledge militate equally against such a conclusion. Seeing, then, that this is all foolishness to man; that, nevertheless, it is not the insulated practise of two or three people, but the universal custom of the world, the form which devotion everywhere assumes; the *crystalization of religion*, if I may so call it, I can only conclude, that though it is all foolishness to man, yet that it is the wisdom of God, and I suppose, that as the command to sacrifice was originally divine, and we all came from one stock, that each nation still retains this testimony of the

Almighty's decree, (and considering how other things have changed or are passed away, this would be little less than a standing miracle,) or else I conclude, that as God has given us the whole creation as a witness of his being, and has formed us with a restless and insatiable desire after happiness, as a token that we were born to something better than we enjoy; so that he has also deeply implanted in the mind of man, some occult idea of the necessity of that mystery of redemption, of which we yet conceive but imperfectly, and of which sacrifice is the appointed token."

Sephora, who always took the active part, was now obliged to leave her mother and her friend in conversation, she would gladly have staid to listen to, while she went to prepare for their departure.

They lived and dressed with so much simplicity, that it did not take her very long to arrange things they were to leave behind, or to pack up those they were to take with them. Here were none of those tinkling ornaments, and cauls, and tires, and chains,

and bracelets, and ornaments for the legs, and head-bands, and tablets, and ear-rings, and rings, and nose-jewels, and changeable suits of apparel, for which the prophet reproved the pride of the daughters of Zion. Pythonissa's errors had, latterly at least, not much declined into personal vanity. And Sephora, from a child, had always been plain in her attire, and preferred simplicity to splendour. This might be, because she saw her father liked it best, or it might be her own natural taste, but whatever first induced the habit, it certainly since had been strengthened and confirmed by seeing, that vanity or pride in any shape is forbidden by the voice of God, and by feeling that it is the natural and irreconcilable enemy of spiritual peace.

As soon as she had made things ready for their departure, she set out their supper, which they all partook of with true cheerfulness of heart, and felt that a meal of herbs where love is, is far better than all the dainties of the earth without it. Vashni was not at all offended at their simple mode of living. His own was almost

equally remote from every species of luxury, only as his family was generally larger, his table was consequently on a more extended scale, and as there were often those among his inmates whose health was so impaired as to be unable to taste the coarser food of life, for them he provided what was suitable to their infirmities. Vashni was glad to find his young friend so active and ready at those domestic duties which, in more polished countries, are sometimes thought to have a natural tendency to debase the mind, and disqualify it for higher enjoyments. But he had always thought that luxury and dissipation were much more apt to weaken the intellect and degrade the man, than the most servile offices of life, and that the hewers of wood and drawers of water were far from being the meanest part of the creation.

He had in his time been a great rover over the earth, and had seen life in much more pompous as well as under much ruder forms, than those which were usual among his own people, and he thought that the pastoral life, which was so generally followed in his

own beloved land, had greatly the advantage of every other; that it had a tendency to raise the mind above the level of vulgar life, and to fill it with grand images of nature. The roll of seasons—the alternate and progressive change to perfection and decay, of the vegetable world—the sustaining hand of providence, filling all things living with plenteousness. Daily and hourly witnessing these works of God, he thought ennobled unconsciously the mind of man. But, however this might be, he was sure that there was a more general purity of life among them than in any other country he had visited, and that they were farther removed from the excesses of barbarism and luxury. He did not then place this difference to the true account—their knowledge of the only God. He had left his native land with a veneration for the religion of his ancestors, but it was only since his return to it, that he had known its pervading power, or felt how it subdues all things to itself, and how all things become religion to the mind of the religious. He knew that the mass, even of his own people,

felt none of this, but he was aware also that they found something of its influence even where they disowned its power, and that the multitude, like the clod of earth in the fable which had lain next the rose, had imbibed some of the fragrance of the flower of heavenly mindedness, though it still remained but earth itself.

Pythonissa, Sephora, and Vashni, were ready with the dawn of morning to set forward towards Mount Carmel. Sephora could scarcely persuade herself that but one day had passed since she went there alone, friendless, disconsolate, and almost without a hope on this side the grave. How soon had the dark clouds of sorrow been chased away, and joy, like the clear shining after rain, succeeded to their place. She was now with a friend who had shown himself ready to comfort her grief and rejoice in her happiness, with a mother whose very soul seemed changed to love. Whichever way she looked the prospect was bright before her, the horizon of happiness was unclouded, and hope and expectation darted their magic

beams over the immediate foreground of life. She was going to new scenes and new society with spirits raised to enjoy them. The world with her, was still in a great measure an unplucked fruit, and where is the youthful mind which has seen it hanging with all its tempting bloom around it, whose hope of happiness has not exceeded its experience, whose pleasures have not exhibited more vivid colours in anticipation than in fruition, and whose indistinct vision of some undefined joy, have borne to be looked closely at without melting into empty air. Yes, even those who know most surely that abiding happiness is only in heaven, still continue to look for it on earth, they think they perceive something like it, and grasping at the shadow, often let the substance fall.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE sun was just rising on the earth when the travellers approached the foot of the rock on which was seated the Canaanitish castle. A crimson light from the east glowed on its dark towers, and showed the ivy and waving fern, which grew on its time-worn walls, with great distinctness and beauty. The foaming river had not yet caught any of its beams. The rocks on the opposite banks were covered with the large golden blossoms of the prickly pear, and though in the full glare of day they had almost too gaudy an appearance, yet seen by this light when only their high summits were enlightened by the first oblique rays of the sun, they added very much to the richness and beauty of the scene.

Pythonissa had been accustomed to look on the charms of her native country with great indifference. She saw nothing in that land of brooks of water, of fountains and

depths that spring out of the valleys and hills, to excite her admiration, though their great lawgiver had spoken of them with prophetic rapture. But now that her mind was opened by gratitude, and she looked on the varied works of the creation, as the operation of the hand of that God who had pardoned all her iniquities, received her into his favour, and filled her with desires after virtue—she saw them with other eyes, and felt that there are pure delights in this world that the guilty know not of.

Vashni was afraid that if they went first to his house, they would not be in time to join the procession, and witness the sacrifices that were to be offered near the foot of Mount Carmel on that side facing the sea. He therefore proposed that they should go as far up the hill in the chariot as the road would admit of, and that they should then quit it and let it proceed empty to his house, while they wound round the top of the hill and descended the other side.

The day was yet in its earliest prime, when they commenced their walk towards

the altar of sacrifice. The mists of night still hung on the top of Carmel, but were slowly yet visibly being chased away by the breath of morning, leaving its silvery drops on all the short and fragrant mountain herbage. The breeze seemed fraught with health, and with each peculiar freshness of the land and ocean. The sea looked calm, deep, and silent, except where it broke over the rude points of rock that advanced into it from Mount Carmel, and girded them with its white and restless foam.

They continued ascending the mountain, and soon reached a summit that filled them with reverence and admiration. They looked immediately down an abrupt and considerable depth of rock, feathered with shrubs of various tints, into a large hollow plain of refreshing verdure. Here were assembled in solemn silence all the inhabitants of that populous and fertile country, for many furlongs round. The stillness of such a multitude was most impressive. The calmness of the untroubled deep that lay stretched out in boundless prospect beyond them, formed a

striking illustration of the scene, at the same time that it added to its force. The attention of the people was all directed to one object. An altar of rough unhewn stone stood in the centre of this comb, and the priests were just preparing to offer the sacrifices. The victims were placed on it, and the rocks soon reverberated with the rending sound of the silver trumpets which were blown over them—the flame was kindled, and as the smoke arose in curling wreaths towards heaven, the people bowed down their heads and worshipped.

As soon as the sacrifices were consumed, the signal was given for departure, and almost with the quickness of thought the multitude were arranged for solemn procession, and all voices and instruments at once struck up a song of thanksgiving to Almighty God.

"Bless the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion. Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down into the beard, even unto

Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing, like as the dew of Hermon which fell upon the hill of Zion, for there the Lord promised his blessing, even life for evermore. Bless the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion. For he has chosen Jacob for himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. Praise him upon the Kithros and Sabeka: praise him with the sound of the Tuph; praise him with the Gnasur and dances; praise him with the strings and pipes; praise him upon the well-tuned Zalzelim; praise upon the loud Zalzelim, let every thing that has breath praise the Lord."

This song of thanksgiving was accompanied with graceful dance.

The dance of the Hebrews was to their poetry, what action is to eloquence, a mere heroic and impassioned gesture—so that they seemed, if we may so express it, to move in metre, and the body, as by an irresistible impulse, to demonstrate the exalted feelings of the mind, and the devout ecstacies of the soul. The combined effect of the whole man being thus taken up in adoration of his

Creator, can scarcely be conceived by those who make the deadness of the affections towards spiritual things, the very test of a superior mind.

The procession having moved once round the place of sacrifice, passed through a cleft in the rock, and disappeared from sight. Vashni said they were going up the winding path among the crags, and that by taking a nearer way they should be able to join them, long before they reached the tabernacles of Carmel. They lingered for a few moments where they were, to hear the fainter song of praise rise from behind the rocks. The words could not be distinguished, but the well-known melody spoke as distinctly to their feelings as the most articulate voice could have done, and called forth responsive affections of gratitude and love. Pythonissa's mind was so engrossed by devotion, that she forgot all her timidity, and walked fearlessly down the precipice which, with her two assistants, she had almost shuddered to climb. When they had reached the bottom they turned to the left, and by a winding path

which the sheep had made through the cistus and mountain heath, which there grew thickly entangled together, they soon entered the most closely wooded part of Mount Carmel, through which the procession was to pass. Exercise, and the sun, which was now risen so much higher in the heavens, made the shade of the trees very welcome to them; they sat down on the trunk of a palm tree that had been recently torn up by a storm, probably by that awful one they had lately witnessed. The branches and leaves still displayed the same verdure and freshness as they did when fast rooted in the earth, like children who sport round their ruined parent, thoughtless of danger and distress, while they still hold their wonted station by his side.

Here they remained, waiting the approach of the minstrels and people. The ground was thinly scattered with deciduous leaves, and others fell at intervals on those already down, with a sound that whispered something of mortality to the musing mind. The song of the minstrels was soon indistinctly

heard, and then lost again among the intercepting rocks. But ere many minutes, the whole chorus burst upon their ear, and seemed to pierce the skies. They turned their eyes the way the sound came, expecting to behold the procession, but though they could see some way down the gentle declivity of the green glade, up which it was to pass, they looked for some time with eager expectation before it appeared. At length it approached, first the priests, then the men with instruments of music, after them the virgin choir with timbrels and dances, and lastly, the mixed multitude of men, women, and children, all following in regular procession, carrying branches of palm and citron in their hands. Many had phylacteries bound round their foreheads and wrists, and every description of person wore their garments fringed with that ornamental flower-work tied with cords of blue, which, in an unlettered age, was ordained for them as a token by which to remember the commands of the Almighty God, that they might suppose them, as it were, written upon the

borders of their vesture; and being taught to read these signs in their youth, when the memory is impressible and tenacious, they never forgot them in after life, and could not look upon this ornament without remembering why they wore it.

From the place where the trio were sitting they saw the whole band at once, and it made a beautiful appearance, advancing up the canopied glade, which presented something between the sombre light of the deep forest walks, and the sunny path of the embroidered plain—a sportive mixture of light and shade, which seemed well to accord with the nature of this holy solemnity—with the festive gladness for which it was instituted—and with the religious awe that tempered its mirth.

The grand chorus of voices had now ceased, and the minstrels were singing in different divisions. The female band were chanting as they advanced, not all at once, but in responsive measures. The sweetness of their voices, the grace of their steps moving in the dance, the pureness of their snowy vest-

ments, and the lustre of youth, which beamed in their countenance, and quickened all their form—added much to the beauty and impressiveness of a scene that must impose upon the senses, even where it failed to touch the heart. They waited till the procession had passed, and then taking branches in their hands, they joined the band that continued ascending the glade through the wood for about half a furlong further, till they came to a steep part of the hill that looked almost like an artificial mound. Some rude steps which were formed in the path that led up this acclivity, landed them on a level plain, in some respects very similar to the one on which they had offered sacrifice. The further part of it was inclosed by another abrupt rise in the mountain in a semicircular form facing the north-west, and along the foot of this steep rock were placed the tabernacles, shining with as much freshness as if they imbibed nourishment from the ground on which they stood.

At the sight of these appointed dwellings, all the instruments and every voice at once

struck up, " How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel; as the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the tree of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, as cedar trees beside the waters. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

The congregation wheeled round the plain as they sung this, and then stopped before their rustic tents. A sufficiency of tabernacles were erected for the stated inhabitants of Carmel and its neighbourhood, but none were provided for strangers; these were now to be formed out of the branches that each person carried in their hand, which was considered as a token that all welcomed them, and were desirous of providing for their comfort. Several of these huts were speedily erected, and the best and most adorned appropriated to Sephora and her mother, and furnished with every thing necessary for their accommodation. The tabernacles that were immediately near theirs, were likewise appointed for Vashni's friends. He mentioned some of them to his new guests as

being particularly worthy of their regard, and seeing that Tarah, Flavious, Miriam, and Caphtor, were then sitting on the edge of the plain that bordered on that declivity of wood they had ascended in their march, he walked up to them with Sephora and her mother, and sitting down by their side recommended them to the kindness of each other, told them that they were all in a peculiar manner the children of the same God, and that they might all look with one mind and one pleasure over their heavenly father's works.

Here was indeed a beautiful display of them, the rich expanse of wood, down which the eye swept as it sought the boundless ocean that lay stretched beyond it, was richly varied with all the splendid colours of decaying nature. The birds, both of the sea and land, were incessantly skimming over it, and displaying their expanded plumage, bright with all the glossiness of life and liberty. The penguin and other sea fowl of more sombre hue and habits, were standing in ranks upon the sands, on an un-

molested part of the coast, watching the waves unfurl themselves against the sounding shore, while further out at sea the halcyons were distinctly seen dancing on the heaving bosom of the deep. None of their own ships were at this time occupied in the waters, but the distant sail of other nations were here and there interspersed in the scene, and at the furthest verge of the horizon, some of the rocky Grecian isles were doubtfully discerned. The promontory of Mount Carmel itself, with all its variety of rock, and wood, and vineyard, and mountain pasture, closed the view on the left.

To the right the rivers of Kishon and Belus meandered down the plain, and the sea advanced in this place more than two furlongs up the country as if to meet them, and formed a beautiful bay, in the centre of which rose the little island of Cephas, and beyond, on the other side of the bay, lay the city of Ptolemais, which stood on the scite of the ancient city of Achho. It was built on a plain, and sheltered on the north by a lofty hill, called the Tyrian ladder. Higher

up the coast, and close to the margin of the sea, stood the castle of Scandalium; above that the white promontory; and still higher up lay the two Tyres, the old and the new. The first of these might indeed literally be said to lie there, for it was prostrate in the dust. It scarcely showed the fragments of its former being, and as for its magnificence that had long since passed away. The new Tyre seemed to rise out of the sea. It was built upon an island which Alexander the Great joined to the main land, by a causeway formed by the ruins of the ancient Tyre. But this artificial isthmus could scarcely be discerned at this distance; so little are the great works of art, when they attempt to emulate or counteract those of nature. Tyre itself, as seen from hence, was certainly a fine object. Its stately columns, its bulky towers, its rising turrets, its glittering sails, and the forest of masts by which it was surrounded, gave it such a look of stability and security, that it was difficult to suppose that Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin was written on

its massive walls. Yet is it now, but what the prophet foretold it should be; "A rock for fishers to spread their nets on," and of its ancient magnificence nothing remains, but some shattered fragments to point out the spot where once it stood; and under the shelter of these ruins two or three fishermen and their families have taken up their abode, and show how literally the word of prophecy has been accomplished. Even now, the group who were admiring it in all its grandeur, saw it as under the sentence of destruction, and it became an object for contemplation, while they wondered alike at its present beauty and its certain fate.

As they were looking with admiration over all this scene, and were as sensible of a gracious God in all they saw and all they felt, as they were of the soft and invisible air that encompassed them—the sound of distant silver trumpets, with lengthened note, swelled on the eastern gale, and enlarged all the devout feelings of Pythonissa's mind. She arose and fell prostrate on the earth in deep

humility. She knew that it was the time of sacrifice on the plains of Zaanaim, and she prayed that her sin offering might be accepted, while she poured forth the incense of a contrite heart.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE whole congregation were soon now beginning to be busily engaged in arranging their provisions for dinner. Vashni and his friends spread out their repast under the shade of some oaks that grew at the edge of the plain, about half a furlong from where they had been sitting. Every face was animated by business and pleasure; all were running here and there, fetching and carrying their stores, or dispersing them gracefully on their enamelled table.

The different groups were soon assembled, but they did not immediately sit down; they waited in silence till every thing was completely arranged, when a zemiroth was solemnly pronounced at the head of each company. Some of these blessings were chaunted, others only said. Each division waited till the next to it had finished; and when grace had been said by all, they sat down to

the social feast. There were almost a hundred in Vashni's company, and many others equally numerous were near. The hum of such a multitude of voices was almost too much for Pythonissa, who was already languid with the exertions of the day. But that which was overpowering to declining health, seemed exhilarating to the robust, and social joy and mirth protracted the meal much beyond its ordinary length, till at a signal given all voices ceased, while God was again acknowledged as the giver of every happiness. When this form had passed through all their companies, they removed from their places, the fragments were gathered up, and they again assembled in front of their tabernacles. and seated themselves in a double circle, when the recitation of sacred poesy began.

Some simply recited what had been written before; others spoke from the immediate inspiration of their own mind, in unpremeditated verse; and others in part in borrowed thoughts, and in part from their own. Most of them took instruments of music in their hand, and all made use of the most expres-

sive gesture, so that a foreigner, who knew not a root of their language, would have comprehended much of their meaning from their action alone.

The recitations lasted between two and three hours. Tarah, Caphtor, Amana, Gadara and Sephora, were among the most interesting of the proclaimers. There were several others who spoke, and all of these sufficiently well to create an attentive, though not a rapturous silence.

Tarah was from the borders of Zebulon; and Caphtor and Gadora from the precincts of Mount Hermon. These, as well as Sephora being all strangers, were naturally struck with those objects which recalled to their mind some memorable fact of their sacred history; and this elevated spot presented many such to their view.

Tarah took for his subject Kadish, one of the cities of refuge.

Caphtor spoke of the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, when fire descended from the skies to consume it; and the water which had been poured on it to deaden it, served but as

fuel to the heavenly flame; showing how ineffectual are all human means, to check or counteract that work which the Lord has ordained shall prosper.

Gadara took for his theme the destruction of Jabin's army, and treated the subject with such animation, that words became things by the enchantment of his eloquence. He brought every circumstance of Israel's deliverance so exactly before his audience, as also their previous degradation, and those sins which were at once the omen and the cause of misery; that they were all ready to shout the praises of him who had led captivity captive, and to exclaim with the enthusiasm of the prophetess who struck off the head of the heathen—"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength."

Sephora next took a Timbrel in her hand, and advanced within the circle to speak of those ancient cities of renown, the fallen and the risen Tyre. She first took up a lamentation for her, whose extinction shook the isles, and made the princes of the sea clothe

themselves with trembling. She dropped her Timbrel, and taking up her Kinoor, an instrument of magic sound, struck some sorrowing chords to prepare the minds of her auditors for what she was about to utter; and stretching out her hand towards that barren spot that once was Tyre, she thus began:

"O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Sidon, whose glorious beauty was a fading flower, how art thou fallen, how art thou destroyed! Thou that wast inhabited of seafaring men; the renowned city, which was strong in the tower of thy pride, and sat as a prince among the nations, and called thyself the anointed cherub, and thought the shadow of thy covering wings a refuge from every blast.

"How did the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; the very sea was troubled at thy departure; the kings of the earth were astonished at the vanishing of thy glory. Then did they know that it was surely the voice of the Almighty which had said—'I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again; thy pomp shall not

avail thee, though the sardins, the diamond, the sapphire, the beryl are thy clothing; yet will I destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.'"

Here she paused as in a listening attitude, and then added in a sorrowing voice—

"The noise of thy songs has ceased; the sound of thy harps shall be heard no more: all joy is darkened, and the mirth of thy land is gone."

Again she paused, and every thought of the assembled multitude seemed suspended on the awful fate of Tyre. Then, taking up her instrument, she sang a more pompous strain, and addressed herself to that city which yet stood firm in the waters, and looked like the empress of the waves.

"O thou, that art situated at the entry of the sea, and art a merchant of the people for many isles. O Tyrus! thou hast said I am of perfect beauty, and thou dost dwell in confidence, for thy borders are in the midst of the ocean, and builders have perfected thy strength. Thy ships are made of the fir trees of Senir, and of the oaks of Bashan have they

made thine oars: fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou hast spread forth to be thy sails. The inhabitants of Sidon are thy mariners, the ancients of Gebal are thy caulkers. The mighty of other nations are in thine army, they hang the shield and the helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness, and have made thy beauty perfect. Tarshish is thy merchant in all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin and lead, they trade in thy fairs. The men of Dedan bring thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony. Damascus resorts to thee for the multitude of the wares of thy making, and for thy various riches; she brings thee the wine of Helbon and the fleeces of her flocks. Sheba and Kenmah! they bring into thy fairs the chief of all spices, with all precious stones and gold. Blue cloths and broidered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with cords and made of cedar, are brought to thee by Asslun and Chilman. The ships of Tarshish sing of thee in thy markets; and thou art replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

" But, alas! a grievous vision is declared unto me; and my Kinoor vainly tries to utter sounds as doleful as thy fate; I see the swift shadows of death overtaking thee; the whirlwind of the south drives them forward; the shriek of the destroyer is in the blast, and Tyrus, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth, must sink like lead in the mighty waters.

" Where art thou, O joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? Thou mart of nations, whither art thou fled? Even now, the prophetic eye looks for thee in vain; and instead of thy gorgeous palaces, sees the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness: while the barren rock on which thou art founded, rears its wreck above the waves, and gives the fisherman a place whereon to dry his nets. Even now, though thy purple sails are spread, and the broidered colours of many nations stream from thy masts, though all thy pompous furniture is still to be found in thee; yet have thy rowers brought thee into deep waters, and the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

Thy riches, thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots—all thy men of war, and all thy company that are in thee shall fall into the midst of the waters; and such a cry shall go forth from thee that it shall rend the heavens, and nations shall tremble at the sound.

"Distant navies shall traverse the waves, and wonder when they find thee not. They shall seek thee through the pathless seas: they know not that hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and that thy pomp, and thy glory, and thy multitude are descended into it. They view not the secrets of that world beneath, they see not the mighty dead stirred up to meet thee at thy coming; and the departed chiefs rising from their thrones, saying—Art thou also become like us?

"Thy pride, and the noise of thy viols is brought down to the grave; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. The waters compass thee in even to thy soul; the weeds are wrapped about thy head, and the earth with her bars is about thee for ever.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O thou daughter of the morning! which did rise like the queen of beauty from the frothy seas: but though so fair, iniquity was found in thee, and thy still increasing pride at length weighed thee down to the lowest hell; and never shalt thou rise again, for the rock of Tyrus is swept with the besom of destruction, and all her mighty palaces are hurled into the deep."

Here Sephora paused, and struck some solemn chords on her Kinoor. Her expressive countenance was become pale with awe, from the emotion her theme inspired. Even nature seemed to have heard her impressive voice, for the sun at this time became obscured by clouds, and the wind sighed mournfully through her hair, dishevelling it as if touched by the disordering hand of grief.

It would be difficult to give an idea of the sensation she had excited, or to realise in any measure feelings and manners that have so little assimilation with our own. We scarcely know how to bring together that assemblage of circumstances so calculated to excite deep interest in the breast of such an audience.

We must bear in mind that in those times it was no infringement of female delicacy to speak before a multitude. Custom sanctioned it, and devotion sanctified it; for it was a privilege that was never degraded by any unhallowed theme. Then we must remember, that Tyre stood actually before them, and apparently with all her outward prosperity about her; yet was she then known to be like the painted sepulchre, full of rottenness within: and her meretricious ornaments could but ill disguise to the prophetic eye, her failing strength and fading beauty. Even now she might be said to be in deep waters, and her final sentence however protracted, was known to be sure. We must consider too the power of music, and the charm of truth; and moreover, that Sephora's voice, the Hebrew language, and its accompanying action, were each in themselves so expressive, that the deaf might have been charmed by the sight of her eloquence, or the blind by the sound.

The assembly still kept their eyes fixed on her, hoping that when the melody of her

Kinoor ceased, they should again hear her sacred recitations; but, she had done; and when the diapason closed, she resumed her seat on the plain with as much simplicity as she would have done had she returned from watering her flock. Her mind was elevated above the desire, or the thought of exciting the admiration of her fellow creatures.

## CHAPTER XX.

No one rose to speak after Sephora sat down, and the assembly soon broke up, and dispersed in various directions. When they went forth to the evening sacrifice, the people were all divided into different bands as in the morning, but, instead of carrying branches of palm and myrtle, they each bore the corban on their head, consisting of offerings of the fruits of the earth. They advanced, chaunting the simple, but affecting outline of their history, calling to mind their origin, their distresses, their deliverance, their preservation: and, concluding with a supplicatory chorus, exhorting each other to beware of the dangers of prosperity.

The different bands sang this alternately, one choir taking up the subject as the other laid it down; and when the last in the ranks had finished, the clanging zalzelims gave notice to the foremost to begin again. And

thus they continued rehearsing this touching memorial of their nation till they reached the place of sacrifice.

The priests had just taken up the beginning of the subject as they passed the projection of rock.

"A Syrian ready to perish was our father; he went down to Egypt to sojourn there, and became a mighty nation.

"The people evil intreated us, and afflicted us with hard bondage; but when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and looked upon our labour and oppression.

"He brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great and terrible wonders.

"He opened a path through the sea, he met us in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness. He kept us as the apple of his eye, he led us about, he instructed us. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her pinions, and beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead us, and there was no strange God with him.

"The angel of his presence went before us; he gave us water out of the flinty rock, and fed us with manna, which our fathers knew not; until he brought us into this land of brooks and streams, where we eat bread without scarceness, and where royal dainties are our portion."

"Our flocks, and our herds, and our riches, and all that we have is multiplied. But let us not say our own power, and the might of our hand hath gotten us this wealth. Let not our heart be lifted up to forget the Lord our God, who brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage."

They waited till all had passed by. The strangers always closed the procession, as they did not carry any offerings, but presented them by the hands of the priests in the respective congregations to which they belonged. Pythonissa and Sephora were among the last of the solemn train, and they joined it in that devout silence, which was alike congenial to their feelings, and becoming creatures who were going to address their

Creator. When they arrived at the place of sacrifice, the lambs which were to be offered were at their evening gambols—running races, bounding off their feet with the mere animation of innocence and happiness, and making a starting-post of the mossy pedestal of that altar on which they were so soon to become victims. The sound of the silver trumpets made them for a few minutes suspend their play, but looking one on another, and seeming to take confidence from that expression of harmlessness and purity they beheld among themselves, they again bounded forward with augmented glee, and the warning tones of death served as the incitement of renewed and redoubled playfulness.

We will not expatiate on the sad reverse of this joyous scene, but surely serious thought stole unawares into many a bosom, when they thus saw the innocent bleed for the guilty. Some inquired what this meant, and others felt and blessed its import.

After the sacrifices were consumed, the priest poured out the drink offering of wine,

and approached the altar of incense, to burn the stacte, the onychx, the galbanum, and the frankincense. The mingled perfume diffused its fragrance through the air, and slowly ascended in curling volumes towards heaven. After these religious ceremonies were concluded, the congregation returned to the tabernacles with the same observances as in the morning, and again sat down by companies on the grass to their evening repast. After supper was over, the elder priest unrolled the book of their law, and read a portion of it, and as he opened the volume the people rose up and bowed with their faces to the ground, and appeared to listen with as much reverence as they would have done had they heard the voice as well as the words of the Deity.

They afterwards separated, and each retired to their leafy tents to meditate on what they had heard, and did not assemble again till the next morning. The priests kept alternate watch by night over the devoted flocks and herds. The number of victims offered in sacrifice were appointed

to diminish each day of the feast. Perhaps to signify how they must gradually fade away, till they gave place to something better, something more abiding, something that had in it an eternal sufficiency.

## CHAPTER XXI.

On the second day of the feast, instead of the recitations after their noontide meal, they proposed to each other enigmatical questions. Archippus the Greek, a proselyte of the gate, whose ambitious mind made him always restless to distinguish himself, and whose desire, even when speaking on the most sacred subjects, was to exhibit himself rather than the truth, thought that this would be a good opportunity of showing the superiority of his mind, and contempt of vulgar prejudices, by striking at once at the foundation of the believer's hope, by making them doubt the inspiration of their holy book. He accordingly began cavilling at some of those parts of it that seem most inconsistent and contradictory. He had staid away from the morning sacrifice, that he might prepare the most perplexing questions, and he flattered

himself that the elders would be unable to answer them.

He first asked how God could be a God of mercy, as he had proclaimed himself to be, and yet order the Israelites when they were in the land of Egypt, to come up against a people who had done them no injury, and not only to take possession of their country, but to exercise such exceeding severities towards them, as not to leave alive any thing that breathed. How could such a cruel mandate be reconciled with a merciful God?

The aged Zarah was rising to reply, when the elders interfered, and begged that the words of experience and wisdom might not be so needlessly expended, when one of the most tender age might be appointed, who would be sufficient to parry the attacks of infidelity.

They named Caphtor of the family of Ithamar, of the tribe of Levi. The modest tint of diffidence and youth came into Caphtor's cheek at thus hearing himself called upon. He arose, and bowing himself down to the earth, said, he hoped the strength

of the bulwark would be proved by the feebleness of the instrument appointed to defend it. Then turning to his opponent he thus addressed him:—

"You ask, Archippus, how such a command as that you have just cited, can be reconciled with a merciful God. I acknowledge that at first sight it does appear a cruel mandate. But why does it appear so?—When we read that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by raining down fire and brimstone from heaven on them, or that he overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea, it does not strike us as an act of cruelty, but justice. Yet in both these instances the destruction was as complete, and as undistinguishing, as in the case of the Canaanites. This proves that it is not the severity of God that shocks us, but his employing man as the agent of his rigour. We think that it looks like encouraging in his creatures the fierce and malignant passions. But if we examine this objection more closely, we shall find it vanish, and be constrained to acknowledge that this decree was intended, and

calculated to promote—not a love of cruelty, but a hatred of vice, and a hatred of that particular vice, to which we, and perhaps every other nation upon earth is most prone, I mean the love and worship of the creature rather than of the Creator.

"You observed, Archippus, that the Canaanites were to the Israelites an unknown people: it is true that they were so: our fathers therefore went forth to attack them, not as their personal enemies, but as the enemies of God. They went, not merely to witness the vengeance of the Almighty against idolatry, but themselves to execute the dread decree. They heard its frantic shrieks, they received its dying groans, they trembled at its dark, expiring cry, unmingled with any ray of hope, unsoothed by any gentle beam of mercy. Can we conceive any means more likely to accomplish a proposed end, than these fearful things were to inspire the Israelites wtih a horror of idolatry? And in fact, if we unroll the page of history, and revert to the past, we shall find that they did accomplish greater things than all the mi-

racles of Egypt. For we read that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and of the elders that overlived Joshua, whereas we all too well know how soon the mercies and wonders in the land of Egypt were forgotten, and the golden idol preferred to the living God.

"If, then, you acknowledge idolatry with all its bloody and licentious rites to be a crime—if you confess that it was good for us to be kept from it, then must you also own that this decree of the Almighty, which you just now stigmatized as cruel, was, in fact, a tender mercy. And let me call your attention to observe the wisdom of God in not reversing the sentences of Egypt and Canaan, in not taking the punishment of the latter into his own hands, and giving up the Egyptians into ours. Then indeed, would the vindictive passions have been let loose, then would fury and revenge have stalked over the earth with unlicensed and ensanguined steps, and hell have been unchained before us. But our Lord knew too well what was in our hearts to trust us with that

work; he reserved it for his own all-tranquil mind, that even in the severest exercises of wrath remains serene, untarnished, and unmarred by any baleful passion.

"Archippus, you are of that nation that affects rationality. Does it not appear reasonable to you, that God should be a God of justice as well as of mercy? And is it not evident that he made justice subservient to mercy, when he condemned the polluted Canaanites to utter destruction, and appointed our forefathers as the executioners of his vengeance?"

Archippus did not deign any direct reply to this appeal, but said "he had a proposition to offer to the consideration of the assembly, which he thought neither Caphtor nor the elders would be able to refute. He believed that he could prove, in a way that would make it clear to them all, that either the origin of their religion could not be divine, or else, that their present hopes of a Saviour must be altogether a delusion." This bold assertion roused every one's attention.

"You say," added Archippus, "that the

law of Moses came from God, and yet you are looking for a Messiah, who is to teach you a purer religion. Now who is this Messiah, who can he be, that he should teach you any better things than God himself taught? Or, even supposing he were God himself, would he come to frustrate his own work?"

Caphtor replied, "that he would not come to frustrate his work, but to perfect it. Observe," continued he, "that bird that towers towards heaven with its notes of praise, or this expanded flower, fragrant as the breath of morning. You acknowledge that both of these are the work of the Almighty Creator. But were not the husk, which protected and concealed this blossom, and the egg, whose inanimate mass contained the elements of the winged fowl, were not these also formed by his hand? God might, it is true, have made these things complete at once, but we find a harmony and a beauty in all the progressive changes and advances towards perfection in the natural world, and so we doubtless should in the kingdom of grace, if we were equally

capable of comprehending them. The husk of the blossom is now trampled in the dust, the shell of the bird is cast away, and the law shall be superseded. But these first works of God are not the less his works because something more excellent and vital succeeds them."

Archippus, who perceived that his fame was not rising so rapidly as he expected by the questions he was proposing, now thought it prudent to maintain his dignity by a disdainful silence, and an assumed air of superiority and pity. After he had sat down, others arose to propose their hard questions.

It was asked "What is that worldly possession which we cannot call our own, and yet if that is not our own, nothing else is?"

Some imagined it to be one thing and some another, but Matri the Benjamite, answered and said, "In this fluctuating and unstable world, who can say that the present hour is their own, and if that is not theirs, what else can be?"

It was next inquired, "Which is the truest mark of humility, to clothe ourselves

in sackcloth and ashes, to bear the reproaches of our fellow-creatures with meekness, or to accept with cheerfulness those afflictions that come from the immediate hand of God?" Many thought that sackcloth and ashes were the surest test of humility. A few who had been deeply tried in the loss of their dearest relatives—in having those silver cords loosed which bound them to the love of life—were of opinion that submission to the will of God was a surer criterion. But Caphtor answered, "That bearing with meekness the reproaches of our fellow-creatures, was the surest proof of humility. For those sorrows which we inflict on ourselves, are often but a more refined kind of pride. And those which God lays on us by his own hand, we feel must be endured—we know that for man to contend with his Maker would be vain. But when we meet with vexations from our fellow-creatures, we are beset with the twofold temptation of resistance and retaliation, and it requires a superior degree of humility to be able to overcome them, and bear their reproaches with meekness."

Various other questions, more enigmatical in their form, were afterwards proposed, and changes of raiment or measures of corn given to those who expounded them. When the questions were ended, the chief of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Esseans, and the Caraites, the four principal sects of the Jews, rose up, and begged to discuss their different sentiments on religion, and point out to each other the absurdity of many of their opinions. Each party thought they had so much more to tell than to hear, that they were unanimous in urging this request, and the elders were about to give their consent, when the venerable Oreb, reverenced for his age and the meekness of his wisdom, as well as for all the noiseless and retiring virtues, rose up, and leaning on his staff, thus addressed the disputants:—

"My children, pause on what you are about to do, before you venture to expose and lay bare the wounds of the people of God. Think again, whether it would not be better by mollifying them with the precious ointment of charity, and binding them up

with the ligaments of love, to endeavour to heal and assuage, rather than to exasperate and inflame.

"My children, I have felt the ardour that I am now attempting to damp. I can well recall the time when my zeal was in its youth, and the spirit of party prevailed over the spirit of God. I too then made my own opinions the exact standard by which to measure those of others, and I secretly despised or openly condemned all those who differed from me. But since then, the mazy windings of sin, which are in the interior of my own heart, have been laid open to me, and it has made me look with a more averted eye on the frailties of my fellow-creatures. I doubt not but your intentions are good, that is, I doubt not but you imagine them to be so. But ask yourselves, whether the finger of derision and scorn ever guided you in your way towards heaven. Even if it pointed out the right path, would you be willing to follow its direction? Be assured, that that same pride which prevented such means from being of use to you, will operate

equally in the breast of others. Consider too, and ask of the times that are past, whether men were ever yet brought all to think exactly alike on any subject. You will find that even on the most trivial, their opinions differ, and much more on this momentous one of religion. Cast your eyes round on this numerous assembly, and see if you can find any one person whose features resemble your own. Yet you are satisfied that these are all men, since you find they bear the human countenance. Or, let us come within a narrower circle; Behold the friend of my youth, the ancient Libnah, of the family of the Zarhites, of the tribe of Judah. Observe where he sits beneath that branching oak, surrounded by his children and his children's children. I have often surveyed them one by one with the eye of curious affection. No two of them are alike, yet by some gracious favour, I could claim each to be the offspring of its sire.

"Do you examine them too, you will then see that you cannot find an accurate resemblance even among the nearest links of the

same family. Be assured, that the mind admits of equal diversity with the body, and do not hope to meet with a more perfect similitude in the inward than the outward man: do not expect to find exact conformity even amongst the most highly favoured of the sons of Israel, but be satisfied that all belong to one Almighty Father, wherever you can trace the lineaments divine of meek humility and heavenly love. Perhaps, then you will say, Are we to see each other's faults and misconceptions of divine truth, and be silent? Are we to see our brother stumbling along through dark and thorny ways, and use no endeavour to bring him into that path of light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day?

"My children, while there are diversities of opinion among us, it is impossible but some must be wrong; and the probability is, that all are so in some degree. Self-love makes us blind to our own failings, and quick-sighted to that of others. This is true of us as individuals, and it is true of us as parties, which, when we have once embraced, our pride

makes us immediately identify with ourselves. You have all deeply scrutinized each other, and I doubt not have mutually detected many errors both in theory and practice. But instead of proceeding in your purpose of exposing them to the eye of the world, let me entreat you to retire to the caves of the mountains, and there in solitude spread those grievances before the Lord, and beseech him to send forth his Spirit to rectify them. Be importunate with him, as if you were pleading for your own soul, and desist not till your conscience bears you witness that God himself might say, 'This is prayer.' Then arise, and go forth, and when you meet any of your offending brethren apart from the rest of the world, tell them of their faults, but do it with tenderness; speak as fallen man to fallen men. Desire no witnesses, seek for no applause, and be satisfied even to have no success, if the Almighty sees fit that you should have none. Remember always the sovereignty of God, and endeavour in all things to lose your will in his.

"Consider too, that the errors you deplore,

may not be of that heinous nature you suppose them to be, nay, if they are the occasion of mutually calling forth in us the kind affections; I doubt not but they may be made acceptable to the Deity. You see this ten-stringed gnasur that stands by my side; it doubtless may be so played upon as to cause the harshest discord, but that same variety of tones when differently touched, may be also made to yield the sweetest harmony. So, haply, those various differences among us which we all bewail, might, if they could be made to strike the concord of perfect charity, produce a melody, more grateful in the ear of heaven than that of the most perfect simple sound. I do not absolutely say that this is so, it may be but the wanderings of an old man's brain.

"My children, I thank you for your respectful silence, and the patience with which you have listened to me. Let me see that you follow my counsel, as well as hearken to it, and may the love of God and man so deeply pervade all our hearts, that we may seek nothing earnestly in this world but the

glory of the one and the salvation of the other."

The venerable Oreb, here quitted the support of his staff, to recline on the earth, with which, ere many revolving suns, his dust would probably be mingled. No one attempted to speak, a pensive spirit seemed to have seized the assembly, and the disputants walked slowly and thoughtfully away. At length, after an interval of silence, Mara the prophetess arose, and took a lute in her hand, which she struck with sweetness and solemnity. Immediately more than two hundred Israelitish maidens advanced to follow her with songs, and dances, and instruments of music.

Mara was a Carmelitess, a daughter of Eliada, of the tribe of Judah. She led the way towards the vineyards of Engedi, which were on the south-east side of the mountain. The movements of her still graceful form, the words of her song, the tones of her lute, now solemn, now plaintive, then nimbly changing to the inspiring notes of confidence and joy, were all alike unpremeditated, and

the extemporaneous effusions of her pious and grateful mind. None presumed to follow her steps but the virginal host, who softly echoed the metre of her song, and the measure of her music, while they followed and imitated the significant action of her varying dance. At first were heard the dirge, like sounds of penitence, accompanied with suitable movements of the body. They bewailed the rancour they had from time to time shown to their fellow-creatures by thought, or word, or deed. Then they changed to more importunate tones and gestures, while they besought their God to alter the spirit of their hearts; to take away the natural spirit of wickedness that was born there; and impart to them his own good spirit in its stead; so that variance might give place to unity, and contentions to peace.

To have beheld them at this period of their devotions, one would have imagined that this troop of maidens, attired in their garments of gladness, had been waiting before the unfolding portals of some eastern monarch, each eager to present their peti-

tions, and to be heard above the rest in their moving supplications. Now they appeared as prostrating themselves before him, and with uplifted hands imploring his mercy. Then suddenly, as if the gracious signal had been given, and they had each obtained their request, they burst into an extatic chorus of praise, and bounded lightly in the graceful dance with the elastic foot of joy. Thus they went on praising and glorifying God in the vineyards of Engedi, till the divided rocks were made vocal by the echo of their song.

During the time that the young women were thus employed, the men went down to the smooth, firm sands, to run their races. This was an exercise that they had brought to great perfection, and many of their swiftest runners had obtained the name of some fleet-footed animal, whose action in flight they were supposed to resemble. The prize they contended for was a myrtle-crown—a simple distinction, but what distinction is there, however simple, that will not call forth pride in the heart of man?

Caphtor was fully sensible of this truth, when the wreath was fixed on his brow. He tried to argue himself into humility, he considered the folly of being elated with such a frivolous superiority, but it was all in vain, he found he could gain no victory over himself, whatever he had done over others. He could not, by any effort forget, that he had obtained what hundreds had been striving for, or blot out the consciousness that the admiring eye of the whole congregation would soon be upon him.

The music of the dulcet choirs now undulated softly over the waves, to collect the scattered assembly for the evening sacrifice. He felt that he was not in that frame of mind that becomes a sinner, just going to do homage to his Creator, and lingering for a few moments behind his companions as they began to ascend the mountain, he plucked the bauble from his brow, and cast it into the sea.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.